

Who Has Custody Over A City Brand? Differences in the City Brand of
Seoul Projected by Place Marketers and YouTube Content Creators

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1. Introduction

“It seems that the question facing place is not whether to brand but how to brand.”

(Hanna & Rowley, 2011, 459.)

In a global competition for resources, differentiation and visibility are key elements for winning. As nearly anything can be turned into a marketable product, even countries are not exempt from the efforts of creating a positive image for themselves. This favorable positioning in comparison to other countries is reached through planned branding efforts. As visibility is a key to attracting new investments, tourists, and residents, local governments see place branding as an increasingly attractive tool with which they can emphasize a place's unique identity and strengths. (Braun, Eshuis & Klijn, 2014.) At first, place branding was seen as fit for capitals and well-known tourist destinations. However, in the current mediated and pluralistic society, increasingly intense intercity competition has driven even smaller cities and destinations to implement place branding (Hanna & Rowley, 2011; Joo & Seo, 2018).

In recent years, place branding studies have seen change and development. Destination Management Organisations (DMOs) and place marketers are finding new ways to promote places via internet, social media, and co-creation with consumers (Riza, Doratli & Fasli, 2012). Instead of the traditional one-way relationships, marketing practices are increasingly leaning towards experiential marketing and participatory branding, highlighting the importance of internal stakeholders, interactive relationships between diverse stakeholders and organizations, and co-creation. This development means that traditional one-way brand communication is no longer enough on its own. For effective place branding, there is a need for a mixture of interactive modes of communication, such as experiential marketing, co-creating, and electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM). (Braun et al., 2014.) Another significant change in place branding is recognizing the link between city identity, city image, and reciprocity (Govers & Go, 2009, 23). This change means that a place brand is no longer thought of as something constructed by place marketers and DMOs alone. Instead, it emerges from interwoven, erratic, and fluid interactions between individuals and collectives, physical and non-

physical, functional and emotional, internal and external, organized and random aspects (Kavaratzis & Hatch, 2013, 76.).

Changes in the way we see place branding also changes the role of place managers. Place managers are no longer the ultimate decision-makers in creating and maintaining a place brand, only one of the multiple stakeholder groups. They should be leaders, initiators, facilitators, and moderators in a place brand dialogue between organizations and stakeholders. These new roles are not only expected but also demanded of place managers. (Kavaratzis, 2012.)

What makes place branding difficult is the difference of e.g. a city's characteristics compared to a traditional consumer product. A city's market position is never static, its name and geographical location are fixed, both city's tangible and intangible attributes must be successfully distilled and utilized in creating and maintaining a city image and city identity, and the resulting image must cater to several diverse stakeholders wanting and expecting different things from the city: the city residents' needs are different from a tourist's or an investor's needs. All these emotional, physical, and monetary values involved in the decision-making processes mean that there is no guarantee of stakeholders accepting the final, proposed city image and identity. (Tasci & Gartner, 2009, 154.) Internet and social media have been proven to strengthen existing perceptions or destroy them. It is via social media platforms that stakeholders share perceptions and produce images of places, which the traditional place marketers cannot control or curate. Additionally, studies show that the city brand perceptions held by the place marketers and stakeholders, respectively, may differ considerably.

This Thesis will focus specifically on studying a city brand of Seoul, the capital of South Korea. The aim is to discover whether the city brand of Seoul presented by official place marketers, such as the Seoul Tourism Organization (STO) and the Seoul Metropolitan Government (SMG), differs from the city brand presented through user-generated content created by the residents of the city. Consequently, the research questions are:

1. How does the Seoul city brand projected by the Seoul Tourism Organization (STO) and the Seoul Metropolitan Government (SMG) promotional videos differ from the city brand projected by user-generated content on YouTube?

2. How does the city identity projected intentionally by the place marketers correspond to the city identity projected unintentionally by the city residents?

This Thesis will begin with presenting the main theoretical concepts of a place brand, place identity, place image, user-generated content (UGC), and word-of-mouth (WOM). Here, the importance of stakeholders, social media, UGC, and WOM in creating and maintaining city image and identity are explained in detail. Chapter 3 introduces the case of Seoul city brand and the brief history of its city branding efforts. Three anomalies of major impact on the city brand are presented. Chapter 4 is focused on the research method, i.e. video content analysis. It also introduces the sampling method chosen for the study, in addition to explaining how the categories and sub-categories used in analyzing the research material were formulated. Finally, the chapter considers the reliability and ethics of the study. Chapter 5 is dedicated to the research material, further explaining why YouTube videos were chosen for this study, and why it is fruitful to compare promotional video material and the UGC. Chapter 6 is dedicated to analysis of the categories introduced in chapter 4. Finally, chapter 7 is focused on the conclusions and implications, as well as providing some proposals for further studies.

2. Main theoretical concepts

Conceptually speaking, the field of place marketing is riddled with disagreements. There is no consensus on whether a place *is* a brand or *has* a brand, or whether a place brand is a consumer product or a context within which consumption takes place. Additionally, no universal agreement has been reached as to which elements are the most vital ones in forming a place brand. (Skinner, 2011.)

This chapter will introduce the main theoretical concepts and expand on their relevance in this Thesis. In the following, the complexity of place brand and place branding will be explained, as well as the core concepts of place identity and place image. The crucial role of stakeholders and the influence of social media in the city brand are also explained. Finally, the relevant concepts of user-generated content (UGC) and word-of-mouth (WOM) are introduced.

2.1 Place brand and place branding

In place branding literature, place branding can be understood either as a concept of its own or an umbrella term covering several other place branding-related concepts, such as destination branding. While Zenker, Braun, and Petersen (2017) argue that the concept of place branding should not be separated from destination branding, many studies regard destination branding separately as place branding in strictly tourism context, blatant tourism promotion, and aimed for tourists for achieving an economic boost in tourism (Friere, 2016, as cited in Skinner, 2018). In this Thesis, place branding refers to the general branding of places for all possible target groups, such as residents, companies, and students, and not only for tourists. (Zenker et al., 2017.) In addition to attracting investment and tourism, place branding includes an internal dimension all about “achieving community development, reinforcing local identity and identification of the citizens with their city, and activating all social forces to avoid social exclusion and unrest” (Kavaratzis, 2004, 70).

As a multi- and cross-disciplinary field, place marketing combines aspects of i.e. sociology, marketing, and urban studies, and a multitude of both qualitative and quantitative research methods. Implementation of place branding efforts and techniques depends highly on local conditions, timing, stakeholder groups involved, and the target which one would like to achieve with place branding. (Kavaratzis & Hatch, 2013, 72.) When successful, place branding creates a positive place identity and communicates it to targeted audiences. In practice, it should “enhance the coherence” of experience of the place, help to maximize using resources in increasing the enjoyability of the place experience, help to facilitate and adjust the experience according to changing circumstances and environment, and instigate “pride of place” which is then shared and communicated. (Hanna & Rowley, 2011, 472.) Ultimately place branding aims for differentiation from other places, for altering perceptions of the place in question (Skinner, 2018), for strengthening the relationship between a place and its stakeholders, and for establishing a good image of the place in the eyes of its diverse stakeholder groups (Kavaratzis, 2014). Therefore, despite its obvious economic intentions, place branding also aims for social functions of identification and satisfaction to the place (Zenker,

2011). However, there is no “one size fits all”- approach, making place brands even more challenging to encompass.

Place branding can be directed to a place of any size, from a whole country to a smaller area, such as a town or only a part of a town. Cities are increasingly relying on place branding to promote growth and attract resources, such as tourism, investment, industry, and new citizens (Lee, 2009). A city brand represents the unique material and immaterial characteristics of a city, integrating historical, geographical, natural, cultural, and industrial attributes (Trueman, Klemm, Giroud, & Lindley, 2001, as cited in Zhou & Wang, 2014). Zenker (2011) refers to analyzing a city brand and its formation as “catching a city”: how the brand captures the nature and essence of the city, how it is conveyed and communicated to different audiences in accurate ways, how the brand is managed and upheld, and how the wanted objectives are reached.

Various perspectives have been taken towards place brands and place branding. One common standpoint draws directly from marketing practices, therefore cities are marketed and managed like products. City branding practices may involve slogans and logos with advertising campaigns or even building flagship landmarks (Joo & Seo, 2018). Quite often place branding is seen as a linear process, with a specific starting point and a set of stages running smoothly from one to the next. This outlook is based on a belief that a brand is easily controllable, and that one brand suits all target audiences. Place branding is seen simply as a one-way communication tool among others (Zenker & Beckmann, 2013; Zenker, 2011), one that can be used in a similar way to organizational and management structures created for commercial products (Skinner, 2011, 283). This point of view regards the city brand as a product with easily defined core characteristics that the marketers and officials can dictate and sell to audiences. In this line of thinking, place marketers tell the audiences how and why the place brand is meaningful to them, limiting the nature of place branding to simply visual tricks, such as logos. This way simply changing color schemes or designs is seen as a way to change the city identity as well. (Govers & Go, 2009, 51.)

However, refusing to consider the diversity and impact of different stakeholders to the place brand easily leads to diluting and weakening the place brand (Zenker, 2011). The major fault is in dismissing city brand as a complex process of both internal and external

factors, which is why the view has lately been challenged by an opposing view emphasizing interactive relationships and the importance of stakeholder groups in the formation of a place brand. (see e.g. Riza et al., 2012; Kavaratzis, 2012; Lim, Chung & Weaver, 2012; Skinner, 2018.) City branding directed by only place marketers focuses too easily on the city's capitalist aspirations and turns a blind eye to the city's diversity, and often its less attractive realities, thereby dismissing its major stakeholder group – the citizens – and local needs (Joo & Seo, 2018). However, to be effective, city branding should convey both the intentions of place managers and the experiences and perceptions of common citizens and audiences (Zhang & Zhao, 2009). Place branding efforts should therefore be consistent with stakeholder accounts reflecting beliefs, attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors meaningful to them. Therefore, a strong relationship with the city's diverse stakeholder groups leads to more a credible place image and city branding. (Michaelidou, Siamagka, Moraes & Micevski, 2013.)

Zenker et al. (2017) regard place branding as the first step in a place marketing process. Whereas the criticized model sees city branding as a straightforward linear process, here the place brand is created in a non-linear, active dialogue between place marketers and stakeholders. As opposed to place marketers dictating what the place brand is, it is constructed out of mental representations of a place shared by multiple stakeholder groups. Kavaratzis and Hatch (2013), on their part, see place branding as an instrument of expressing and impressing perceptions. Since perceptions are entirely in individuals' minds, they are conflicting, multiple, and varying in nature. Places, in turn, are the stimuli evoking associations. Therefore, place brand management is primarily management of perceptions. Instead of a simple marketing tool used to enforce an official agenda, place branding expresses the culture of a place (aka the internal perceptions of the place), leaves impressions on others, mirrors these impressions of others in city identity, and reflects evoked changes back to culture (aka the internal perceptions of the place).

The current brand literature agrees on that brands are not simple and controllable, but complex and in constant flux. (Riza et al, 2012; Lim et al., 2012; Skinner, 2018). When place brands are considered to be dynamic and interactive processes, not just outputs of processes, it can be argued that successful place branding never occurs on its own. The participation of several stakeholder groups is essential in the process of a positive brand formation. Hanna and Rowley (2011) claim that stakeholders such as visitors or citizens

will have an experience of a place regardless of it being purposefully managed or not. Both place managers and stakeholders may explicitly strive to control and manage place branding processes or simply leave them to their own devices, but a successful place branding always requires active and conscious participation of stakeholders. The role of stakeholders will be further explored later in this chapter.

In summary, place brands are complex and multidimensional, and consist of multiple time and place-specific elements such as place buildings, history, culture, economic, political and geographical aspects, as well as all the associations attributed to all these (e.g. modern, old-fashioned or central) (Zenker et al., 2017). Place brands are highly subjective and depend on the interactive relationship between the place and the perceiving subject (Zenker & Braun, 2017). What is essential is to realize that the processes involved in a place brand are not linear, therefore the output of step 1 is not necessarily an input for step 2. A place brand is a continuous process that never stops, and it is receptive and responsive to both external and internal influences. Therefore, place marketers and other official state organizations cannot force their visions onto stakeholders, and they cannot control the city brand alone. (Kavaratzis & Hatch, 2013, 81.)

2.2 Differentiating place identity from place image

As with the concept of place branding, there is a lack of consensus with defining the concepts of place identity and place image, as well. At its simplest, Skinner (2018) separates the two as follows: when implying that a place *has* a brand, one refers to brand image. Accordingly, when implying that a place *is* a brand, brand identity is in question.

Adams (2008, as cited in Skinner, 2011, 285) claims that places have always been associated with peoples' identities and experiences, which is why they have intrinsic value to all people. For Kavaratzis and Hatch (2013, 74), place identity means "distilling the essence of the place" in a dialogue between different stakeholders and place branding efforts. Place identity is not simply an outcome of identity-creation processes, but the actual processes themselves. Kavaratzis and Hatch (2013, 74) understand place identity as internal to the place, forming from the inside-out and referring to "how we see ourselves". In the context of cities, it means the perceptions of the stakeholders internal

to the city. These perceptions are different from those of the stakeholders external to the city, the “outsiders”. Place image, in its turn, is formed oppositely from the outside-in, referring to “how others see us” (Kalantides, 2011, 37). Therefore, a city image consists of perceptions of stakeholders external to the city, such as tourists or residents of other cities or countries. Place image consists of e.g. memories of the place, urban elements of the place, and word-of-mouth (Riza et al., 2012).

Even though defining city identity, the very DNA of a city (Riza et al., 2012, 294), is often said to be the first step in the process of place branding, it is essential to understand that city identity is not simply a result or a steppingstone to the next phases of place branding. City identity is a shared reality that is actively constructed through social interaction (Aitken & Campelo, 2011, 915). Therefore, place identity is heterogenous, always in flux, never constant (Skinner, 2018; Kavaratzis & Kalantides, 2015), and cannot be regarded as an end product of some controlled process.

Skinner (2018) and Hatch and Schultz (2002) and Kavaratzis (2013) deem it counterproductive to separate place identity and place image from another. While place identity is difficult to construct, a place image can be formed by both formal and unbiased external sources. Former refers often to official place marketers charged with building, maintaining, and managing wanted perceptions. The place marketers strive towards establishing a certain favorable place brand. By creating and disseminating promotional imagery they contribute to a place image, which can ultimately take root and change the place identity: the place image and place identity are in a never-ending cycle of expressing, reflecting, impressing, and mirroring their perceptions of the place. This constant communication has the ability to both contribute to the place identity (Hatch & Schultz, 2002 as cited in Kavaratzis & Hatch, 2013, 77) and change the place image (Riza et al., 2012). Place identity and place image are therefore two sides of the same coin, and the coin is a place brand. The internal perceptions of place identity and the external perceptions of place image entwine, forming the place brand. The more the place identity and the place image coincide with each other, the easier it is to create, maintain, and manage a cohesive and strong place brand.

Branding literature shows several attempts to categorize ways of communicating brand perceptions and thereby constructing place image. Kottler (2002) suggests first projecting

an appealing, simple, and distinctive image; defining attributes, such as natural resources, forming a basis for strong branding; developing an umbrella concept covering separate branding activities for different stakeholders; and using visual and recognizable images or symbols to represent the place. Kavaratzis (2004) uses a simpler division of brand perceptions into primary, secondary, and tertiary communication. The primary communications, “place physics”, consist of e.g. geographical location, architecture, infrastructure, real place offerings such as museums, and the behavior of place residents and other stakeholder groups. Communication is not their main goal. Secondary communication aka “place communication” refers to communication through official channels, advertising, branding, and PR. Tertiary communication aka “place word-of-mouth” (WOM) includes WOM reinforced by media and first and foremost, the residents themselves. While tertiary communication is important for the place brand, place marketers rarely have control over it.

Gunn (1972, as cited in Michaelidou et al., 2013) similarly argues that the first way of place image construction is an organic image based on social and noncommercial sources. The second way is through the assimilation of information from commercial sources, such as travel agencies, brochures, or advertisements. The third way is through personal experiences, which are often more realistic and complex than the first two. Gunn argues that the organic and personal experiences are more powerful than the commercial sources, because of their higher credibility and emotional aspects, whereas the commercial sources tend to focus on practical aspects of e.g. price, convenience or availability. What is important in creating experiences and memories for the different stakeholder groups is that the experiences cannot be forced. Pine and Gilmore (1998) give argue that the best opportunities for positive experiences require giving the experience a theme, harmonizing the impressions with positive cues affirming the nature of the experience, eliminating negative cues, mixing in memorabilia, and engaging all five senses.

2.3 The role of stakeholders and user-generated content (UGC)

There are several stakeholder groups that can be identified in relation to places, both internal and external to the place. These groups can be e.g. tourists, investors, companies, new citizens, qualified workforce, students, residents of different socio-economic groups

and subcultures, celebrities, and entrepreneurs (Braun et al., 2014; Zenker et al., 2017; Zhou & Wang, 2014). According to Kavaratzis and Hatch (2013), stakeholders are the most important element in place branding, and Aitken and Campelo (2011 as cited in Kavaratzis 2012) have based a whole approach on the importance of stakeholders. For Baker (2007, as cited in Kavaratzis, 2012), stakeholders are crucial, for place brands created behind closed doors without reaching out to stakeholders will fail. If stakeholders are not included in place brand creation, place managers re-imagining the city identity may often end up obscuring it instead of strengthening or changing it. Consequently, the new city identity and city image are ignored, denied, or marginalized by the stakeholders, leading to an artificial place brand lacking credibility. That is when the stakeholders may actively resist the place brand instead of supporting it and delivering on it. (Hanna & Rowley, 2011; Lee, 2009)

According to Taifel and Turner's (1979, as cited in Zenker & Beckmann, 2013, 8) social identity theory, "the residence or home of a person determines a strong part of the person's self, distinguishing strongly between the We and Them". As every group has different knowledge and experience levels of the city, one should expect several diverse core associations of the city of Seoul as well (Zenker & Beckmann, 2013; Kotler & Gertner, 2002). Kotler and Gartner (2002) argue that most city images are based on pervasive stereotypes, no matter how dated and inaccurate they are. Dinnie (2010) similarly states that the out-groups external to the city often show more common and stereotyped associations, whereas the in-groups should possess a more diverse and heterogeneous place brand perception. Therefore, a place brand resonating with foreigners may seem overly simplified in the eyes of the locals. Oppositely, a sophisticated brand attractive to the locals may not be appreciated by non-residents. For this reason, it is likely that not all stakeholder groups accept the place brand proposed by the place marketers. (Tasci & Gartner, 2009.)

One of the most important stakeholder groups for place brands are the residents of the place, for they are simultaneously part of the place brand, targets of the place brand, and contributing to the place brand (Skinner, 2018). Braun, Kavaratzis and Zenker (2013) see that residents have three important and simultaneous roles as a stakeholder group. First, they are integrated part of the brand through i.e. their characteristics and behavior. Second, they are ambassadors for the brand, for they give credibility to communicated

messages. Third, they are also citizens and voters, thus vital for the political legitimization of the brand. Therefore, residents both initiate and legitimize place brand activities. Another major power residents have over place brands is the residents' identification of their place of living. In this case, identification refers broadly to creating a meaningful connection between self and the city of Seoul and incorporating attributes of the place brand into one's self-concept. (Zenker et al., 2017.) The better the place brand reflects the residents' self-concepts, the more readily residents accept the brand.

To overcome the problem of multiple stakeholder groups and to achieve a successful place brand, Buhalis (2000, as cited in Tasci & Gartner, 2009) suggests that there should be collaboration rather than competition among the stakeholders, the place brand should be congruent with the city identity, the brand elements and values should be clearly communicated, and finally, due to the diverse stakeholder group perceptions of the city brand, the brand strategy should have a clear target market. To ensure that the stakeholders accept the proposed place brand, Kavartzis and Hatch (2012) claim that place managers should completely renounce their control over the place brand. Stakeholders should be actively motivated and allowed to form and define their own place brand meaning, instead of treating them as passive onlookers to be consulted on only when needed. To Kavartzis and Hatch, stakeholders constantly re-define the processes and core elements that make the place brand. Place managers need to engage in a "multilogue" with stakeholder groups, whose conflicting voices contribute to the place brand (Baker, 2007). The construction of a city image should, therefore, be executed in cooperation with outside professional consultants, visitors, and residents alike, in the form of i.e. strategic sponsorship of creative projects, events, and competitions (Machin, 2014). These projects, such as the Korea Tourism Organisation's (KTO) "My Korea Travel Tips 2018" video contest, allow participants to express their opinions and views on the city. With "My Korea Travel Tips 2018", the content creators gave KTO permission to utilize the video content as marketing material for Seoul tourism. User-generated content rich in stories and experiences in Seoul has great potential to positively impact the development of place image (Machin, 2014) due to its organic and authentic nature. Studies have shown that organic sources are often perceived as more reliable sources of information than the ones of place marketers. Accordingly, it can be concluded that the role of consumers has turned into that of a co-creator, turning stakeholders into an element of great importance in place image and therefore place brand formation.

User-generated content (UGC) covers posting, curating, and sharing content, therefore sharing experiences, garnering attention globally, and contributing to creating place brand perceptions and place image (Lim et al., 2012). It is place image formation through selecting, sharing, reflecting, and experiencing content, functioning as electric word-of-mouth (eWOM). eWOM and its significance will be explained in further detail in chapter 2.4. The power of user-generated content lies in its personal narrative of places the content creators encounter. While these media products circulate through social media, they are consumed by other users and will influence other media products. Therefore, through social media, stakeholders are simultaneously experiencing, co-creating, and co-producing a certain place and contributing to its place image. (Huertas, Míguez-González & Lozano-Monterrubio, 2017.) As a result of UGC, place marketers cannot own and manage a place brand like a product brand. In addition to the varying levels of knowledge and needs between different city stakeholder groups, this “prosumption”, in which consumers serve both as consumers and creators of content, can lead to discrepancies between place images created by the place marketers, and the place image and identity created by organic sources (Zenker & Beckmann, 2013; Skinner, 2018).

2.4 Social media and word-of-mouth (WOM)

There are several definitions of social media. In this particular context, they are understood as an “Internet-based application conveying consumer-generated content” (Blackshaw, 2006, as cited in Lim et al. 2012, 199), where application refers broadly to a multitude of consumer activities such as sharing, posting, tagging, liking, and blogging. To Blackshaw, consumer-generated content consists of pairs of elements created and conveyed by social media users. Such element pairs can be e.g. facts and opinions, impression and sentiment, founded and unfounded tidbits, and experience and rumor. Consumer-generated content is always created, disseminated, and used by consumers, aims for educating others in some way, and is motivated by the hunger for fame, urge to have fun, and desire to share experiences with friends and “friends” online.

Tv, newspapers, and magazines are characterized as old media with top-down control approach, produced and managed by professionals. In the past, they were the primary

way for place marketers to promote a place brand. Even though broadcasting mega-events or videos on TV can increase the popularity of a city, the traditional media are expensive and provide very limited feedback from the audiences. (Cao, 2011.) Furthermore, the traditional media have time and space limitations which decrease their coverage significantly (Zhou & Wang, 2014). As contrast, “new media” forms of websites, social media platforms, blogs, pictures, and video sharing sites such as Wikipedia, Twitter, Flickr, and YouTube, allow for two-way communication between place marketers and their stakeholder groups, making place branding participatory and cooperative. Social media does not share the traditional media’s limitations of time and space, therefore giving notably wider exposure and increasing awareness of the city more efficiently (Cao, 2011). Accordingly, social media is a prolific platform for building, promoting, and maintaining a place image (Zhou & Wang, 2014). According to Joo and Seo (2018), social media also fills a “public-private partnership”. Its interactivity enhances satisfaction and identification of stakeholders to the city brand, due to the fact that content is generated by both governmental agencies and any common content-creator. Compared with traditional media, social media enable an effective multi-network system of city marketing with participation, interaction, and transparency. With relatively moderate expenditure, social media makes global coexistence of place marketer-generated content and user-generated content possible. Simultaneously, these very opportunities to participate have diluted the authority of place marketers as the sole manager of place brands and place identities (Lim et al., 2012).

According to Florek (2011, as cited in Kavaratzis 2012), internet and social media function both as promotion and communication channels and as online communities associated with the place brand and the place in question. They are services inviting engagement through direct and strong participation, and they enable UGC. Therefore, everyone can influence how place brands are created, perceived, evaluated, and disseminated. Based on Keller’s (1993) brand equality conceptualization, Andéhn, Kazeminia, Lucarelli, and Sevin (2014, 4) claim that people store associations about a brand in their memory. These stored associations are moments of experience from which brand equity is ultimately formed in an individual’s mind. These moments of experience can be gained via social media, which shape brand meanings through both intended and unintended use and may project alternative meaning of brands to vast amounts of others online.

The social media have created a powerful channel for disseminating word-of-mouth (WOM) in the form of user-generated content (UGC). In addition to social media's appeal, effectiveness, and global coverage, studies have proven their powerful influence on consumer purchase and decision-making processes. Place marketers have acknowledged that the usage of consumer-generated content is effective in customer support and branding strategies. Social media have also become one of the top sources for searching for e.g. traveling information. (Lim et al., 2012.) Therefore, social media have become a stable part of the common marketing mix, used by official place marketers and consumers alike. For place marketers, social media can be part of the planned business strategy, while for consumers it serves as e.g. leisure time and a way of doing information search. What is relevant is that both actors are contributing to the brand of a place through their actions, be they for business purposes, or simply spending time. (Lim et al., 2012.) However, studies show that while place marketers may be active in the online environment, their social media usage tends to be rigid, top-down, and take place on only a few platforms, primarily focused on the city's official websites. This does not line up with the ways current younger generations operate online: using several different platforms flexibly and fluidly. (Skinner, 2018.)

Recent attention to researching word-of-mouth is an indicator that place brand is increasingly understood as dependent on stakeholders' experiences and perceptions rather than being what the place managers depict (Baker, 2007; Hanna & Rowley, 2011). Informal talk of a place between stakeholders is increasingly visual and reinforced by the media, i.e. sharing photos on the social media platforms (Zenker & Braun, 2017). This electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) makes social media platforms vital for disseminating and creating a place brand. As with Blackshaw's concept of consumer-generated content, there are three similar basic motives seen to initiate WOM: a sense of community duty and an obligation to share information, pleasure from sharing information, and a desire to help others (Hanna & Rowley, 2011). What makes WOM so powerful and persuasive is its informality: the originator is not seen as having a vested interest in the matter at hand. By posting their content related to the place brand, be it videos, comments or essays, stakeholders are not only sharing their experiences of the brand but also creating the brand (Lim et al., 2012). Hanna and Rowley (2011) suggest that WOM can also be utilized in

figuring out whether the official place brand and stakeholder experiences of the place brand accord.

According to Hanna and Rowley (2011), word-of-mouth is a powerful communication form, Internet and the social media only having strengthened its potential impact. Studies suggest that WOM has the capability of tripling the effectiveness of advertising, and advertising may also trigger WOM. Gartner (1993, as cited in Hyun & Cai, 2009) argues that place advertising as a traditional source of tourist information has less credibility than word-of-mouth classified as non-touristic information. What is more, Beerli and Martin (2004) found that WOM and past experience is closer to direct experience of a place, and therefore this personal communication has a greater impact on image formation process than place marketer promotions.

Even though WOM can be seen as one of the strongest communication tools, it is very difficult for the place marketers to influence and control. Positive experiences may create a desire to act as a place brand advocate on purpose or unintentionally. However, WOM and its impact can be negative as well as positive, and even great brand experiences may not turn audiences into brand ambassadors or even create WOM strong enough to be noticed in the vast information flood of the social media.

3. Case: City brand of Seoul

As city branding of many global Asian cities is led by the government, the branding efforts focus on creating an image and reputation that can get them to the level of global Western cities with old and stable city brands. Brand promotions are often focused on themes such as rapid economic development, modernity, and technology. Seoul, the capital of South-Korea, is no exception: the city has long endeavored to obtain an image as “one of Asia’s economic powerhouses”. (Joo & Seo, 2018, 2.) However, when compared to some popular European destinations, Seoul’s city brand is relatively young. As its roots date back to only a few decades, Seoul’s city brand is still searching for its form. In the last two decades, after successfully emerging out of poverty and actively pursuing development, Seoul has entered the competition of building a competitive city image attracting tourists and global investors alike (Joo & Seo, 2018).

An environmental analysis executed by the Seoul Metropolitan Government (SMG) at the beginning of the 21st century revealed that Seoul was not as familiar and unique as its nearest countries and biggest rivals China, Japan, Singapore, and Hong Kong. As these cities had been consciously using marketing and segmentation techniques in city branding for years, Seoul was late to the game. It became a necessity to rapidly build a unique image beyond just the capital of the country. (Kim & Kim, 2011.) Under mayor Lee Myungbak's administration, the Seoul Metropolitan Government (SMG) organized a slogan contest in 2002 to choose Seoul's first brand slogan. The "Hi Seoul" slogan would serve as the city's brand for thirteen consecutive years (Joo & Seo, 2018) and was a kickstart for applying the private sector's marketing strategies to the public sector.

The mayor following Lee Myungbak directed significant financial resources to make Seoul's brand one of the 10 most competent ones in the world (Joo & Seo, 2018). Accordingly, SMG established a new department, Global Marketing Division (formerly 'City Marketing Taskforce') to work closely with several advertising companies and to create an image of Seoul as the world's hub. Its responsibilities focused mainly on the domestic level, including e.g. publishing a monthly journal for citizens, creating a promotional song about Seoul, and maintaining the "Hi-Seoul" city brand. Active overseas promotions were taken up in 2006 as a part of starting to use integrated marketing communications in a coordinated manner in television advertising, print media, and outdoor advertising (Kim & Kim, 2011).

At first, the perceptions related to Seoul's city brand were neither clear nor cohesive (Kim & Kim, 2011). In the beginning, the main perceptions sought after were "a welcoming and environmentally responsible" and a "first-class global city". Slogans such as "Refresh your Soul in Seoul" and "Be @ Seoul" attempted to highlight the city image as rich in culture and advanced in science and technology. The following image in 2007 was intended to be a more sensitive and modern one, a 'clean and attractive city' with 'emotional modernity'. This was communicated through the slogan "Soul of Asia" (Kim & Kim, 2011.) In 2007 Seoul also titled itself as a "design city" in the hopes of becoming the design capital of the world (Joo & Seo, 2018).

The year 2008 can be thought of as a breakthrough for the Seoul city brand. First of all, the budget reserved for city branding was over ten times the amount of the previous year (Joo & Seo, 2018). As SMG realized the hidden potential in the tourism industry and the value of creating a strong, positive city brand recognized worldwide instead of focusing solely on domestic promotions, 80 percent of the budget was directed to international advertising. SMG's goal for the city brand became attracting more tourists and thereby boosting South-Korea's economy: Seoul's popularity would benefit the country as a whole. The new city brand slogan "My Soul Story" aimed for turning regular sightseeing into experiencing the destination in new ways and sharing the individual experiences with others. (Kim & Kim, 2011.)

Despite the efforts to target external audiences and prioritize Seoul's transformation into a competitive Asian global city, the development and implementation of branding strategies mostly happened behind closed doors with little to no communications with internal stakeholders of the city. As the top-down approach was led by the government and private-sector experts, stakeholders at the grass-root level experienced the branding efforts simply as the regimes' strategy for pursuing economic growth (Joo & Seo, 2018), not promoting Seoul's city identity as it is.

Joo and Seo (2018) present three anomalies marking a significant turn in Seoul's branding projects. First, in 2012 Seoul seemed to finally abandon its strong growth-first ideology to promote community values. The concept of the world's first "Sharing City" borrowed from the concept of sharing economy and emphasized sharing with one's neighbors. The second anomaly is the launching of a 63-minute documentary movie "Bitter, Sweet, Seoul" in 2014. The documentary combines 141 globally sourced video clips that present Seoul at its best and worst, a real representation of life far from the polished imagery typically on city branding materials. The atypical film is seen as an effort to enhance word-of-mouth. However, the film is not communicated as Seoul's official promotional video and is currently available on YouTube only. (Joo & Seo, 2018.) The third anomaly happened in 2015 when Seoul abandoned its "Hi Seoul" brand after thirteen years of use. As the new slogan was supposed to reflect the new vision of Seoul as citizen-centered, public participation was included in every stage of development. The new brand was to be open-ended, relying on users' interpretations instead of a fixed bunch of meanings decided upon behind closed doors. Despite the government's efforts, the new "I Seoul U"

brand became parodied and ridiculed by Seoul residents. It was judged for not making sense in English and quickly came to represent the negative aspects of urban life in Seoul, such as high rental prices in the form of “I will raise your rent”. An opinion poll revealed that 40% of the respondents preferred the old slogan “Hi, Seoul”. (Joo & Seo, 2018.)

These three cases are significant in Seoul city branding because they do not represent the standard approach of promoting a city’s competitive assets with little to no citizen involvement. Instead of the typical top-down approach, Seoul allowed for diverse stakeholder views to lead them towards a participatory and unconventional alternative to mainstream city branding. However, the cases also show how stakeholder participation alone is not enough to guarantee a successful result. Even though the approach for creating the latest “Hi Seoul” brand was novel and more inclusive than any of the previous campaigns, Seoul citizens still perceive it as marketing-oriented and external to their lives. (Joo & Seo, 2018.)

Despite the critique from stakeholders, Seoul’s city brand has developed from weak to a strong one in less than 10 years. *Saffron Consultant City Brand Barometer* shows that Seoul has claimed top positions in categories such as “future challengers” and “the ones to watch”. South-Korea’s international visibility is inarguably increasing. *Bloom Consulting Digital City Index – Asia 2018* notes that news coverage of North-Korea, e.g. the 2019 peace treaty with South-Korea and the following nuclear weapon testing, direct attention to the neighboring country of South-Korea as well, but do not seem to affect negatively on the city brand of Seoul. Additionally, Korean cosmetic products are trending on fashion and lifestyle circles; and the Korean Wave, the popularity of Korean television series and pop music, reaches its arms around the globe.

Nowadays Seoul recognizes the power of social media and strives for harnessing it as part of its branding and marketing strategies. For example, in 2017 the Seoul Tourism Organization (STO) organized a competition on YouTube to find what they call ‘tourism entertainers’. These entertainers are English-speaking content creators, who are given diverse city experiences in exchange for videos and social media content of the city. The main idea was to promote Seoul more efficiently to the international audiences, via using content relevant to them. (Shin, 2017.) The success of these kinds of endeavors validated SMG’s realization that a city brand should, indeed, combine experiences and

consumption instead of solely promoting the city as a historic location (Kim & Kim, 2011).

Currently, both STO and SMG offer a wide variety of promotional materials such as two official websites filled with information, videos and free pdf guides on various topics; social media channels such as YouTube, Twitter and Weibo, newsletters, promotional booths in conjunction with global K-pop concerts, and customized promotions in selected international cities. Whereas STO is focused solely on tourism, SMG includes stakeholder groups such as expats, students, and workers as well. Therefore, their promotional materials offer additional information on current events in Seoul and key policies such as urban planning, welfare, and security.

4. Research method: video content analysis

In this chapter, the research method of video content analysis is introduced. Additionally, the sampling method of this study is introduced in detail, followed by the categories and sub-categories used in the study, as well as the method with which the categories were formulated. Finally, the reliability and ethics of the study are considered.

Content analysis is used in studying a range of ‘texts’ from transcripts of interviews to the narrative and form of TV programs and the advertising content of magazines. Here ‘text’ refers to any spoken, visual, or written material, anything serving as a medium for communication, or any combination of aforementioned used to gather information and make deductions on (Macnamara, 2005; Pietilä, 1976, 21). Therefore ‘content’ may refer to words, ideas, meanings, themes, pictures, symbols, or any other message that can be communicated (Neuman 1997, as cited in Macnamara, 2005). In a nutshell, Lasswell (as cited in Shoemaker and Reese, 1996, 10) describes content analysis as “Who says, what, through which channel, to whom, with what effect”.

According to Macnamara (2005), content analysis can be divided into two traditions: the behaviorist and the humanist. The behaviorist approach is often executed through quantitative analysis, whereas the humanist approach often involves qualitative analysis. This study falls into the latter category since qualitative content analysis recognizes that

media texts are open to multiple diverse meanings to different readers, paying attention to audience, media, contextual factors, the relationship between the text and its likely audience meaning, not solely the text. The qualitative approach recognizes that the texts may contain several forms that might get lost if reduced to only qualitative data. Qualitative analysis of texts is significant in understanding the deeper meanings of texts and the likely interpretations by audiences, often the goal of analyzing media content. Furthermore, in qualitative content analysis, a variable refers to aspects of how something is represented, not to 'reality'. What is analyzed is the content as represented, not some externally defined truth. (Van Leeuwen & Jewitt, 2001.) Therefore, with qualitative video content analysis, it is possible to study what kind of perceptions media content such as YouTube videos present of the city brand of Seoul. However, combining both qualitative and quantitative methods would yield the most comprehensive results. (Macnamara, 2005.)

The research method used in this Thesis is specifically video content analysis, which refers to content analysis of video material not recorded by the researcher themselves. The purpose of video content analysis is to extract features, identify structures and turn them into semantically meaningful representations which will serve as building blocks for e.g. video retrieval, video similarity finding, summarization, and navigation. The analysis may focus on single video frames (images), sequences of frames, camera or subject motion, audio through speech recognition and non-speech sound characterization, or any combination of aforementioned. Videos are very complex units since the categories involved in the analysis are not fixed and can change due to the analyst interpretation (Huertas et al., 2017). As video content analysis is a non-intrusive research method allowing for examining data over a wide-ranging period of time (Macnamara, 2005), the best results are achieved by limiting the number of considered elements and features. Using rules and heuristics will improve the accuracy of both analysis and classification, as will a multimodal analysis considering different video modalities (Hauptmann, 2009), the method this Thesis focuses on.

Newbold et al. (2002, as cited in Macnamara, 2005, 80-81) suggest three steps for sampling in media content analysis. The first step is the selection of media forms and genre, which for this study are sets of STO and SMG promotional videos in addition to non-commercial user-generated content made by Seoul residents. The second step is

selecting a time period for the analyzed content, here approximately a period of one year from January 2019 to March 2020. The third step is the sampling of relevant content from within those media. According to Macnamara (2005), sampling for qualitative analysis does not need to meet a statistically valid formula like the ones required of quantitative analysis. However, qualitative research strives for investigating chosen themes in great detail, and random sampling methods may not necessarily yield useful data either. Therefore, the UGC channels selected from YouTube were found by using both Google and YouTube search engines with terms such as “Seoul”, “A day in life in Seoul”, “vloggers in South Korea”, and “Youtubers in South Korea”.

Since the media coverage of this study is quite large and extends over several months and multiple individual YouTube channels, census as a sampling method is not possible. Instead of selecting all the units in the preliminary sampling frame created based on the search engine results, four videos from each YouTube channel fitting the established criteria were chosen. In addition, the chosen videos each represent roughly one of the four seasons to get a more well-rounded view of Seoul’s diverse natural environment. The videos date back to a maximum of two years. Videos filling the following criteria were excluded: content is not filmed in Seoul, the content producer does not live in Seoul, the content producer has lived in Seoul for less than a year. Video genres such as music videos, pro-tip videos for travelers before one’s trip to the city, and language teaching videos were also excluded. Furthermore, videos on a commercial or organizational channel, channels that did not have enough subscribers, channels whose newest content is over two years old, channels that have not uploaded enough videos, and channels that have content in languages other than English and subtitles by a person other than the original video creator were also excluded. This study does not include UGC from native Koreans for two reasons. First, the language barrier would have made the analysis dependent on subtitles by a stranger whose Korean skills are unverified and therefore possibly prone to mistakes. Second, channels by native Koreans were not easily found in YouTube. This is most likely due to using search terms in English only.

As a result, this study includes a total of 59 videos, of which 28 are user-generated content and the rest are official promotional videos. As stated previously, the promotional videos in this study are seven videos of ‘I Seoul U’ campaign and ten videos for ‘Beautiful Place in Seoul’ campaign for Seoul Tourism Organization (STO), and four videos for ‘Seoul, a

special city for you and me!’ campaign and ten videos for ‘[I·SEOUL·U] I, You and Seoul’ campaign for Seoul Metropolitan Government (SMG). The official promotional videos by STO and SMG will hereon be referred to as the promotional videos, whereas the video content created by YouTube users is referred to as the UGC.

As a basis for executing the analysis, Margolis & Pauwels’ (2011) “Multimodal framework for analyzing web phenomena” is utilized. The first phase precedes the actual analysis and consists of the preservation of first impressions and reactions. In this initial assessment, the researcher makes an instant assessment of the content in terms of “look and feel”. For this study, a simple index was created with the name of the channel and video, link to the video, main topics, length and genre of the video, and the publishing date, as shown in Tables 1.1 and 1.2.

Channel	Video	Description
YO' HOMEGIRL	Life Update In Seoul, Korea What Have I Been Up To! (vlog)	"Here's a vlog of the past 2 months of my life here in Seoul~"
YO' HOMEGIRL	Having Too Much Fun In Seoul Fashion Events, Concerts, Karaoke4days-and a whole lot more	"this is just what I've been up to these past months. Life in Seoul has been pretty good these days, I'm really lucky :3"

Table 1.1 Example of the simple index for “look and feel” of the content, part 1/2

Main theme	Format/Genre	Length	Published	Link
Recollection of December (not focusing on sharing specific information or showing the city)	Vlog	11:54	22.1.2019	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DUvWbj2hzLM
Recollection of several days (not focusing on sharing specific information or showing the city)	Vlog	10:07	29.11.2018	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rxK1i6q8eQU

Table 1.2 Example of the simple index for “look and feel” of the content, part 2/2

The second phase is an inventory of salient features and topics: concentrating on collecting and categorizing present and absent features and topics in the chosen sample. This involves making an inventory of features and attributes that are present, and an inventory of main content categories and topics. This phase was executed with a model created for this purpose. The model features six main categories and 24 subcategories

with which collecting video features, elements, and observations are made possible. The model is explained in detail in the following chapter 4.1 The third phase is an in-depth analysis of content and formal choices, taking the first look of potential information residing in separate modes, and performing an analysis of the cross-modal interplay between image, written text, sound, overall design relations, since meaning is often constructed by an interplay of two or more elements. The third phase also includes comparing the gathered observations of both the UGC and the promotional video content.

4.1 Categories for analysis

The assessment of gathered data is guided by the specific research interest of this Thesis, the projected city brand of Seoul. As video recordings hold an extraordinary amount of information and details, it is neither fruitful not practical to analyze whole videos in minute detail. Therefore, episodes and fragments to focus on were selected based on a few interests. Here the focus is influenced by the overall interest in the city brand, which is why only parts of the video where the city is visible or present or the topic of conversation are registered. Since some details and conduct will not be apparent with a single look (Heath, Luff & Hindmarsh, 2010), the selected fragments were watched and overviewed several times.

With qualitative content analysis, researchers often avoid using preconceived categories. The categories and their names are allowed to emerge while getting immersed in the data. (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005.) However, to get a comprehensive outlook on the city identity and image of Seoul from video material not filmed by the researcher, preliminary categories for analysis were created by combining and modifying three existing theoretical frameworks: “Dimensions/attributes determining perceived destination image” (Beerli & Martin, 2004), “Brand personality scale” (Aaker, 1997), and “City Brand Hexagon” (Anholt, 2006). These frameworks and models have several elements in common, which is why combining them created a framework considering multiple dimensions of a city brand, i.e. the physical and the intangible attributes and associations people may attach to them. In addition to the three existing frameworks, the formulation of the final categories is based on the conception that place brands are based on, but not limited to, elements such as characteristics of city architecture, heritage, language,

people, myths, legends, history, politics, culture, and values (Cai, Gartner & Munar, 2009). After analyzing the research material for the first time, the following six primary categories and 24 subcategories remained:

1. Natural resources & environment

- 1.1 Weather (temperature, humidity, sunshine, etc.)
- 1.2 Variety and uniqueness of flora and fauna
- 1.3 Nature (landscape, mountains, water, parks, etc.)
- 1.5 Overcrowding and traffic congestion
- 1.6 Air and noise pollution, cleanliness

2. Leisure & recreation

- 2.1 Activities
- 2.2 Nightlife
- 2.3 Shopping
- 2.4 Shows, events, festivals and concerts

3. Gastronomy

- 3.1 Food and cuisine
- 3.2 Cafés and bars

4. Tangible & intangible heritage (culture, history, art)

- 4.1 Museums, monuments, historical buildings and sites
- 4.2 History, religion, traditions & folklore
- 4.3 Customs and ways of life
- 4.4 Popular culture
- 4.5 National symbols

5. Cityscape & general infrastructure

- 5.1 Architecture and cityscape
- 5.2 Public amenities and services
- 5.3 Ease of access to destinations
- 5.4 Safety and crime
- 5.5 Prices

6. Social environment

- 6.1 Hospitality and friendliness of locals & personal encounters
- 6.2 Language barriers

As mentioned previously, video layout and design reveal ideas, opinions, and aspirations of the creator via combining visual, verbal, sonic, and textual elements. Descriptive words in relation to the city brand categories give strong indications of the speaker's attitude towards the city, such as "disgusting" or "trendy", as well as tonal qualities such as aggressiveness, sarcasm, and emotional language. (Macnamara, 2005.) Music can provide strong cultural indications via e.g. genre, ethnic origin, ritual function, or sub-cultural affiliation. Other sonic signifiers revealing information about the city of Seoul are e.g. non-verbal sounds, such as laughter and screams; and non-vocal sounds such as car breaks, train whistle, or a noisy crowd. (Margolis & Pauwels, 2011.) Sounds in general can be used to enhance the realism of the imagery (Chion, 1994; van Leeuwen, 2007). Therefore, for analyzing the city brand projected by the videos, five secondary categories based on the model of Margolis and Pauwels (2011) were added to the model:

1. The main actor (what they do, facial expressions, gestures)
2. Verbal signifiers (what is said, how, with whom and to whom)
3. Sonic signifiers (sounds, background music)
4. Layout & design signifiers (video format/genre, editing)

As the actions and words of the main actors are closely related to the six other categories mentioned here, findings regarding the main actor and verbal signifiers are incorporated in the analysis and discussion of each primary category in chapter 8. Sonic and design signifiers are discussed separately.

In line with methods of qualitative content analysis, the categories were modified while analyzing the research material. Some categories were combined and some completely removed. Removals were made due to the categories not applying to the city of Seoul, for being too complex to analyze within the framework of this Thesis, or for being too focused on tourism and therefore leading the analysis too far from the research questions. Examples of such removed categories are 'beaches'; elements related to accommodating tourists, such as 'number of hostels' and 'cheap accommodation'; and elements related to conducting business, such as 'job opportunities' and 'how easy it would be to establish a business of your own'. Some originally separate subcategories are combined, such as 'air and noise pollution' and 'cleanliness'. Additionally, including a seventh category of 'atmosphere and emotional brand values' was considered, including subcategories such

as ‘sincerity’, ‘excitement’ and ‘sophistication’. However, as these categories are highly subjective, the results would have been picked based on verbal cues, which already have a category of their own, or interpreting body language and facial expressions of people on the video. In addition to including a major risk of misinterpretation, it would have been too time-consuming to execute for this Thesis. Similarly, the subcategory ‘beauty of scenery, attractiveness of surroundings’ was removed due to ‘beauty’ being highly subjective. What is more, beauty of the environment can be traced via verbal exclamations, therefore rendering the subcategory unnecessary.

Finally, according to Margolis and Pauwels (2011), it is also useful to perform a ‘negative’ analysis and to pay attention to elements and aspects that are meaningfully absent. These absent topics and features can be culturally as meaningful as the present ones, potentially uncovering cultural taboos or tacit norms and values. The negative analysis does not have a category of its own but was considered in each existing category while analyzing the research materials. Relevant findings of negative analysis are incorporated in the analysis in chapter 6.

4.2 Reliability and ethics

There are several elements affecting the reliability of this Thesis. According to Macnamara (2005), it is near impossible to conduct qualitative content analysis with scientific reliability. The research method relies very heavily on the researcher and the way they interpret the media texts. Therefore, some misinterpretations of the research material may have occurred regarding e.g. interpreting the body language, verbal cues, or the sonic signifiers on the videos. To avoid misinterpretation of verbal cues as much as possible, only UGC in English or subtitled in English by the creator themselves were chosen. Therefore, the analysis is not dependent on a third party’s translation skills. What is more, Margolis and Powers (2011) emphasize that spotting significant elements in videos require specific knowledge for both the video genre and the culture under study. For this reason, e.g. some cultural references may have been missed due to the researcher’s lack of knowledge in Korean history and culture. Additionally, even though the categories for analysis were based on several well-known models and concepts, the categories used in this Thesis may not be accurate or all-encompassing enough to analyze

a city image in depth. Finally, secondary sources are used in the Thesis more than what would be preferable, due to difficulties in accessing the original sources.

In addition to combining both qualitative and quantitative research methods, the best result would come from having a bigger sample. Qualitative content analysis is time-consuming and intensive, which is why often the samples of media content are quite small (Macnamara, 2005). The sample in this Thesis is quite small as well. For the same reason, the results of this study may be scientifically unreliable and only scrape the surface of this topic. A larger sample would be necessary for fully being able to compare content produced by place marketers and non-commercial content-creators. Additionally, the small sample makes it possible to miss certain things that are, in fact, a reality in Seoul, but did not occur on the chosen videos. For example, it is common knowledge that Seoul has reoccurring trouble with air pollution in the form of fine dust (미세먼지). The pollution can get so bad that the government warns citizens to remain indoors and not move about without a face mask with air filters. However, this common issue was not evident on either set of videos. If such a common element of Seoul was completely unencountered during the analysis, is the chosen sample so small that some other major characteristics of Seoul have been left unseen as well?

With videos as a source, there is a possibility that they are later on deleted or made private, and therefore cannot be accessed later on. Additionally, YouTube is not the only media platform on which STO and SMG function. They contribute to place brands on e.g. their official websites, other social media such as Instagram and Twitter, and the traditional media. Therefore, it cannot be said how major the promotional campaigns elected for this study are for these place marketers and whether there are campaigns and channels that reach far wider audiences and popularity than the ones analyzed here. For example, the documentary film “Bitter, Sweet, Seoul” had in 2018 been viewed for about 52,000 times. Compared to Korean popular culture, which is not controlled by place marketers but contributes to forming and maintaining the place image, the documentary most likely had a lesser impact on the city image than e.g. the music video of Gangnam Style. The music video was filmed in Seoul and became YouTube’s most-watched video within four months of its release date. Its 2.5 billion views most likely have a greater impact on Seoul’s city image than the documentary actually created for that purpose. (Joo & Seo, 2018.) It is neither known which channels and formats of promotional material are most

vital to STO and SMG, nor which channels and formats of promotional material have the largest coverage, therefore impacting most the perceptions of the Seoul city. It could be more fruitful to compare the most popular promotional materials with the UGC. However, since these promotional videos are part of place marketing efforts, they are valid and useable as research material. It would also be useful to know of which elements the Seoul city brand is actually constructed and what are the exact target groups of both STO and SMG promotional efforts, for they inevitably affect the form of their content offerings and thereby the city image that is being created.

It must also be noted that STO is a tourism organization aiming for “the best way for the citizens and the tourists to coexist and build the strongest ecosystem” (About STO, 2020) with a mission of increasing tourism in Seoul, it is only natural for them to focus on promoting the nicer sides of Seoul. Therefore, it should be expected that the findings between especially the STO promotional materials and the UGC may have some major differences in terms of presenting Seoul city in a certain light.

5. Research material

This chapter explains why YouTube videos are fruitful research material for this Thesis and briefly presents the research material used in the study. The characteristics of YouTube and its relevance for this study are further expanded. Finally, the reason for comparing Seoul city’s official promotional videos to the user-generated content of the city is explained, as well as its relevancy.

5.1 YouTube as a social media platform

A city brand is often communicated through several different media channels in diverse forms. These promotional messages and communication aim to stimulate mental images, one convenient way being promotional videos filled with appealing audiovisual imagery. As important image creators, promotional videos are utilized in generating knowledge and building a positive image of the place. (Huertas et al., 2017.) The research material of his Thesis consists of promotional videos of the Seoul Tourism Organization (STO) and the Seoul Metropolitan Government (SMG), in addition to user-generated content.

The STO videos consist of 7 videos for 'I Seoul U' campaign and 10 videos for 'Beautiful Place in Seoul' campaign. The SMG videos consist of 4 videos for "'Seoul, a special city for you and me!'" campaign and 10 videos for '[I·SEOUL·U] I, You and Seoul' campaign. Additionally, a set of 7 non-professional, non-commercial YouTube channels were chosen, from which a total of 28 videos were extracted for analysis.

YouTube was originally launched in June 2005. The simple integrated interface for uploading, publishing, and streaming videos without deep technical knowledge, equipment, or other resources was created to remove technical barriers faced by non-expert users wanting to share videos on the internet. The combination of user-created videos and mainstream media content has made YouTube a dominant platform with approximately billion users watching a billion hours of content each day in 2017. (Burgess & Green, 2018.)

As a social media platform, YouTube is less obvious as e.g. Facebook or Twitter. The videos themselves are the vehicles of social interaction. Collaborating, uploading, viewing, and discussing content create a network of collective activities where the content creators represent themselves as a part of a community of 'YouTubers'. (Burgess & Green, 2018, 77-78.) YouTube serves as a channel for everyday expression, creativity, cultural participation, and community formation. It is a platform for creating and sharing amateur content produced by unpaid, nonprofessional individuals operating outside any formal industries. However, YouTube has always been a commercial enterprise-oriented towards professional production, too. This commercial content is produced by paid professionals inside e.g. formal media industries, and comes with issues of copyright protection, professional aesthetics, and the challenges of commercializing reach and attention. (Burgess & Green, 2018.) In this Thesis, the promotional video series by Seoul Tourism Organization (STO) and Seoul Metropolitan Government (SMG) are used as research material in the category of professional video production, comparing them to the non-paid and non-professional UGC videos.

The amateur and professional sides of YouTube are increasingly entangled, serving as an example of the broader trend toward convergences of the market and non-market modes of cultural production in the digital environment. Burgess and Green (2018) claim that participatory culture is the core business for YouTube: anyone can participate in any form

from casual viewing and binge-watching to highly invested and intensive participation as a content creator, a media company, or a brand. It is the collective creativity and communication of the users and audiences that generate value. Once a video is uploaded to YouTube, it can be instantly viewed at any time and place and disseminated to such an extent that they become viral phenomena (Huertas et al., 2018). The created pieces of content circulate on diverse devices, are embedded and disseminated in posts across the internet, discussed and co-watched in formal and informal settings, and produced in both every day and professional settings.

Videos create strong experiences and a sense of the viewer being on the scene of action themselves. This sensation of telepresence is “a sense of being in a mediated space other than where the physical body is located” (Biocca 1997 as cited in Huertas et al., 2017, 40). Via telepresence, videos create direct real-life experiences in a virtual environment (Huertas et al., 2017, 40), impacting stakeholders’ mental imagery of the place, emotional responses to the place, and intentions derived from them (Cai et al., 2009). Videos create powerful emotional experiences and fantasies of places by e.g. showing what activities could take place at a certain place; communicating attributes such as nature, gastronomy, or cultural heritage; and displaying social relations or feelings of enjoyment or adventure. (Huertas et al., 2017.) Therefore, the vivid experiences directly affect how a place is perceived by individuals and have a strong impact on creating and communicating place images (Yongho & Cai, 2009; Huertas et al., 2017). The more emotional values a video contains, the more engagement it generates, thereby leading to a better place image and attraction towards the place. According to Huertas et al. (2017), videos can create a more positive attitude towards a place than auditive advertising.

Consequently, YouTube videos are an excellent way of providing viewers real-life experiences of the city of Seoul, thereby presenting essential elements of the city brand constructed by both STO, SMG, and residents of Seoul. YouTube provides a platform for participation in digital media culture for a broad range of participants (Burgess & Green, 2018), and the same user participation in videos, likes, shares and comments have the potential to create, enrichen, and promote place brands (Huertas et al., 2017).

5.2 Comparing content created by place marketers and social media users

Primary players in city promotion are traditionally the municipal departments, such as the News and Tourism sectors (Qiu, 2005 as cited in Zhou & Wang, 2014). This is the case with Seoul as well: the Seoul Tourism Organization is a municipal institution with a mission of enriching and expanding Seoul's tourism industry (About STO – Vision and strategy, 2020), and the Seoul Metropolitan Government is a local government dealing with administrative affairs of Seoul as a whole. STO and SMG's promotional videos strive for exhibiting Seoul's city identity and the core values making the city unique.

As explained in chapter 3, Seoul place marketers have certain perceptions of the city and what the core values are and should be. According to Margolis and Pauwels (2011), video layout and design choices reflect the opinions and aspirations of the creator, such as nostalgia or controversy. These choices can range from color schemes and image symmetry to captions and soundscape. The more the content-creator is responsible for the choices made, the more these choices reveal about their culture and ideals. Especially in professional video productions, every detail holds meaning and no detail is haphazard or accidental. As such, the STO and SMG promotional videos present a clear version of Seoul city from the place marketer point-of-view. The promotional videos intend to create a pre-planned effect in the viewers, such as strengthening a certain city image or a need to travel to the city.

Even though the UGC content is most likely not as carefully planned and executed as the official promotional videos, they do include similar design and layout choices in video editing, in addition to including and excluding elements worth showing to the audiences. In YouTube, vlogs are the most prominent video genre (Burgess & Green, 2018). The vlogging content producer confronts and responds to a multitude of interruptions and encounters while out and about in the city: they constantly choose what routes to take, where to stop, and whom to interact with. They may unexpectedly get interrupted by actions of other humans, creatures, natural elements, or mechanical ones, such as changing traffic lights. As opposed to the pre-planned promotional videos, the UGC creator has no control over their surroundings. They can only spontaneously respond to

these events, thereby creating sensations of liveness, immediacy, and conversation in their video content (Burgess & Green, 2018). To a viewer, this kind of organic content may feel more genuine than the efforts of the professional promotional materials. However, the UGC creator is not a mindless puppet but has agency: they act, speak, participate, and show the landscape and environment of their own volition. (Margolis & Pauwels, 2011.)

Both unintended and intended video elements reveal the content creators' opinions, feelings, and perceptions of the city as well as creates and enforces the city image. Comparing both the video material consciously aiming for creating a city image and unconsciously affecting it will yield similarities and differences in the way the city of Seoul and its identity, image, and city brand is presented and perceived by the place marketers and the city's important stakeholders – its residents.

As stated previously, the stakeholder perception of a city brand can differ considerably from the conception of the place marketers, and the more similar the projected and perceived city images are, the more likely stakeholders will accept the proposed city image. Cai et al. (2009) argue that when information of a destination is extracted from sources independent of the destination itself, one can get a fuller picture of the demand-side perspective of the place. As videos only present content and elements the creators deem relevant, comparing official promotional videos and UGC of Seoul city will potentially reveal how well the place marketers' perception of Seoul city image corresponds to that of the Seoul residents. From this, it can be deduced what city elements the place marketers deem of value to Seoul's city brand. Based on the possible discrepancies between the official perceptions of the city image and the city image reflected by the UGC, it would be possible for Seoul place marketers to adjust the projected city brand to better correspond the needs and expectations of the wanted and necessary stakeholder groups.

6. Analysis

This chapter will present and discuss the major findings that appeared during analyzing the research material. The analysis and discussion will focus on each of the 12 main

categories and their subcategories introduced in chapter 4. Based on the analysis, it can be said that there are four major differences and six major similarities in the way the promotional videos and the UGC present the city of Seoul. These results will be further discussed in chapter 7. An example of the Table used in analyzing the research material is found in the attachments as Table 2, Table 2.1, and Table 2.2.

6.1 Natural resources and environment

In presenting the range of weather in Seoul, a major difference is found between the promotional videos and the UGC. The promotional videos present a static beautiful weather warm enough to move about without outerwear, clear skies and extravagant sunrises and sunsets. Nature is shown at its most beautiful times, such as trees blossoming in the Spring or in their vibrant autumnal colors. However, these moments have no transitional periods between them, leaving out the awkward months when trees are black and bare, all vegetation is still biding its time, the weather seems gloomy and the natural surroundings are gray and nondescript. Based on the promotional videos, winter is not deemed as marketable as the other seasons. Wintertime is shown neither visually nor via verbal cues. In all the promotional videos, there is only one off-handed remark of the current weather being very cold.

Where the promotional videos emphasize the moments when nature is in its fullest and leaves the plain the daily weather and state of nature aside, the UGC show viewers the bearings as they are at any given moment. Based on the UGC, there are four distinct seasons in Seoul during which the temperatures may get both unbearably hot and cold, and the rainy periods may last for days on end: "It's insanely hot today, like, insanely hot" (Cari Cakes, 'Summer in Seoul, Ice Cream, and Books + Meeting Q2HAN! | Life in Korea Vlog'); "It's been raining like this non-stop for the last two days" (2hearts1seoul, 'Week in the Life VLOG | Already Summer in Korea? [국제커플] 고양이와의 일상 & 자전거길에 연등이???'). Even when the weather or the seasons are not at their best, the content creators often state how beautiful and pleasant the same surroundings are during mid-season, when e.g. the flowers are blossoming, trees are not bare or there is a proper amount of snow.

The most notable difference between the promotional videos and the UGC is that the promotional videos use nature and environment deliberately as main visuals evoking positive emotions. Focus is on the absolutely most beautiful elements, such as bright sunshine, blazing sunsets over the Han river or vibrant greenery of nearby parks: "If you come here in the afternoon and just relax and enjoy the Autumn breeze and the Autumn sky, I think you can really find a bit of happiness in your everyday life" (VisitSeoulTV, Beautiful Place in Seoul, '[뷰티플레이스] 날씨 좋은 날! 올림픽 공원에서 스냅샷과 피크닉을 즐기자!') On the UGC the surrounding nature may be commented on, but the views and the environment are rarely the sole focus of the video. Another example of this is the Han River, which is very much appreciated in both sets of videos. On the UGC, the river is often seen only in the background as a natural backdrop, or it is crossed on the way somewhere. On the promotional content, the river is featured much more deliberately. In addition to being presented as a remarkable fixture of the city, the river is also something to engage oneself with: the river is included in watersports, walking or jogging along the stream and other pastimes, such as inspiration for art.

Despite these differences, the promotional videos and UGC do share some similarities as well. Both insinuate that nature and urban landscape in Seoul are constantly connected: trees have been planted in-between the car lanes, there are green parks and no-car zones in the middle of the city, the mountains are visible behind the city buildings, and likewise, the city is visible from the mountains.

When it comes to overcrowding, the promotional videos feature much more varied crowds than the UGC. On one hand, the city is presented as a place where it is possible to enjoy quiet time alone rather than actively engaging with others. On the other hand, it is a place where one never needs to be alone, for there are always crowded streets or big concerts and public events attracting huge crowds. Therefore, the crowds on the promotional videos reflect the desired mood. For example, there are little to no people when the intention is to convey an image of peace or calmness of nature, such as on 'Scenic Nature by BTS' Jung Kook' (VisitSeoulTV, I.Seoul.U). When the mood is supposed to be energetic, there are massive crowd-gathering events with people squeezed side by side, such as on 'Exciting moments by J-hope' (VisitSeoulTV, I.Seoul.U.). This is not the case on the UGC, where the content creators have no control over the crowds.

The UGC shows that there are lots of people around at all times, but even the narrowest of streets and alleys never seem overcrowded. The content creators holding and speaking to a camera neither bump into people, get bumped into, nor have to squeeze through a crowd. Either overcrowding is not a problem in Seoul despite its millions of inhabitants, or the content creators are avoiding crowded areas or are out during times when the majority of citizens are at work or at school. Where it gets crowded, however, is indoors, since the majority of cafés seem to be tiny, and popular restaurants seem to always have long lines or waiting lists.

In regard to cleanliness, there are no trash or overflowing dumpsters on any video. However, the old buildings and neighborhoods can seem a bit dilapidated and ramshackle because of e.g. the paint coming off, old-fashioned architecture, materials such corrugated iron, things look like they're falling down or are tied together with rope, not having enough streetlights, and electrical wires hanging low. An example of such an area on the UGC is shown in Figure 1. The promotional videos do not show neighborhoods as gritty as the UGC. Even when the surroundings are old and a little run-down, it seems deliberate and still visually pleasing, not dirty or off-putting. Based on the promotional videos, Seoul is an effortlessly clean city.



Figure 1. An example of a grittier area on the UGC.

Noise pollution seems to be a bigger issue than dirtiness, especially on the UGC. On the promotional videos, noise pollution is impossible to detect due to the nearly constant background soundtrack. On the UGC, traffic noises and other people can occasionally get

so loud that they elicit exclamations from the content producers, who then wait until the noise is over: "Oh god, noisy, NOISY" (Cari Cakes, 'being grumpy and sick in seoul VLOG | museums, book stores, cafes' upon the traffic noises drowning everything else). The levels of traffic and congestion are difficult to assess on both sets of videos. There seem to be cars on multiple lanes at any time of the day. However, the promotional videos never show any transition from place to place, and the majority of the UGC creators are most often either walking or taking the subway. On the UGC, there are hardly any mentions of traffic except for its occasional loudness, and the only footage of using public transportation features peaceful scenery from the bus windows. Based on these observations, it seems that even if the traffic is bad in Seoul, it is easy to avoid with other means of transportation and does not warrant separate mentions or warnings to the video viewers. It is also possible that some or majority of the noise pollution is hidden under the background music, rendering the problem smaller than it is in reality.

There is one troubling observation: as mentioned in the previous chapter, Seoul is commonly known to be troubled by fine dust (misemeonji, 미세먼지) polluting the air to such an extent that the government may warn people to avoid moving outside and to use an air filtering face mask. Despite being a reoccurring and common problem in the city, it was in no way evident on either set of videos.

6.2 Leisure and recreation

"I think Seoul is filled with more energy than any other city" (Seoul City Official, "Seoul, a special city for you and me!") describes well what both the promotional videos and the UGC agree on. Seoul provides an endless amount of activities for any need: alone or in a group, indoors or outdoors, relaxing or adrenaline-filled, traditional or modern, self-governed or with a guide, shopping, culture, sports, courses, activities of any price range and at any time of the day or week. Seoul is a city that never sleeps. The relevance of social media as an integral part of our lives has been recognized by designating a photo spot for all activities. Additionally, all the places and activities on the promotional videos are presented with a hashtag for sharing the experience with online communities, turning individual experiences into collective ones while organically enforcing positive city brand independent of the city's promotional marketing efforts. This finding indicates that the place marketers have recognized both social media as a promotional tool and the

effectiveness and value of people sharing content on their own, creating and maintaining a credible and natural city image. Based on the UGC, many activities seem to be located near to each other. However, the promotional videos never show moving from one activity to another. Therefore, it could be more time and resource-consuming than the videos let on. As prices are hardly ever mentioned on neither set of videos, the expenditure required cannot be guessed. Since the UGC producers are mainly regular citizens showcasing their ordinary lives, it is safe to assume that most of the activities on their videos are accessible within a reasonable budget. Therefore, the activities featured on both the UGC and the promotional videos should, to an extent, be accessible to majorities. For example, the karaoke places (noraebang) featured on the promotional videos are spacious and stylish, whereas the ones on the UGC are small and drab. Therefore, singing karaoke must be a common and favored pastime in Seoul, but it can be done both spectacularly at a high cost or in a more common and economical way.

One curious finding is that the UGC mostly showcase ordinary activities, such as shopping, visiting a bookstore, or taking a walk by the Han river. These videos also feature a lot of aimless wandering around in the different neighborhoods of Seoul, whereas the promotional videos always have a specific purpose in what is being shown: instead of simply walking around, it is a walk in the oldest part of Seoul among traditional hanok houses, and instead of simply stopping for lunch due to hunger, one purchases a traditional meal or a skewer of funny-looking tornado potatoes at a street food market. Every activity has a purpose related to the unique characteristics of Seoul.

One difference between the UGC and the promotional videos concerns children. Marie's Kawaii World ('Yeonnam-dong is a Top Korean Hipster Neighborhood') says that many cafés and restaurants in Hongdae area either have a "no children" policy or do not allow in children under a certain age. On the promotional videos, however, children are seen engaged in fun activities such as falconry, visiting a real battleship, or playing outdoors. Contradictory to the UGC, the promotional videos are signaling that Seoul is a nice place for families with small children as well.

Shopping is an activity that should be assessed separately, because this major feature on the UGC is almost completely disregarded on the promotional videos. The UGC show an enormous abundance of shopping opportunities. Shopping has been turned into a fun

pastime even without actually spending money, with stores incorporating interactive elements such as photo booths, staged photo walls, and seasonal art displays. Stores are meant to attract attention and interest as much as any tourist attraction: for example, an outerwear store ‘Discovery’ features a gigantic polar bear, a neon-colored hot air balloon, and miniature but functional basketball court and a bowling alley as part of their store display, whereas ‘Scratch Angels’ holographic windows and a bouncy castle (Marie’s Kawaii World, ‘Top Places to visit in Garosugil in Sinsa-dong Gangnam [가로수길]’) Shopping opportunities are supported from flea markets and vintage shops to underground shopping malls, street vendors, unique local stores, expensive labels, huge shopping malls and more. Some areas of Seoul are more focused on certain types of goods: Hongdae area is for small clothing stores of local brands, underground shopping malls for cheap items, Gangnam area for high-end brands, and Ikseon-dong for traditional goods such as hanbok-outfits and utensils for tea ceremonies. Due to efficient air conditioning, shopping is also described as a way of escaping the scorching during the summer heat: "To be honest, when it's hot, isn't the air-conditioned shopping mall best?" (Den and Mandu, ‘도심에서 여름을 이기는 방법! 수영장부터 막국수 먹방 그리고 카약까지! [외국인코리아]’). The diversity and turnover of stores is a notable and defining characteristic of Seoul on a societal level as well: "Make sure you patronize these little businesses --- the turnover is pretty great and you might not find the place again after one year --- once a neighborhood like this becomes popular, the landlords will start to raise the rent and the small businesses can't afford the higher rent --- these independent businesses are pushed out and then you'll see an influx of all the Korean beauty shops and chain restaurants and then everything starts to look the same -- I think there's value in having neighborhoods like these packed with unique independent businesses" (Marie’s Kawaii World, ‘Yeonnam-dong is a Top Korean Hipster Neighborhood’).

When it comes to events, the UGC briefly featured a variety of political rallies, club concerts, esports tournaments, ‘meet & greet’ events, weekend markets, and exhibitions in public areas. However, these events are most often only mentioned in passing and are not the main focus of the videos. Since the UGC producers share their regular lives in Seoul, them not participating in events, tours, and special activities does not necessarily mean that these kinds of activities are not popular in Seoul. It is also possible that the content creators in the study are not interested in participating in events, or that major

events do not happen in the particular videos selected for the study. In contrast to the UGC, the promotional videos purposefully showcase diverse extravagant events such as the Sinchon water gun festival, the color run, sports at the Jamsil baseball stadium, and massive arena concerts. Some events are interactive, like a 360-love story video one could make on the Seoulo 7017 highway exhibition. Outside organized events, there are always buskers and street performers in certain areas to enjoy. One foreign artist on a promotional video says they frequently visit Seoul due to its various festivals (Seoul City Official, I.Seoul.U, ‘I, You and Seoul: #5 Seoul is harmony’).

Hardly any of the UGC show or mention nightlife in Seoul, even though the city is clearly vibrant and lively throughout the night as well. The image of Seoul’s nightlife is therefore based almost entirely on verbal signifiers. Channel ‘외국인코리아 Den and Mandu’ (further on referred to as ‘Den and Mandu’) say on their video ‘외국인이 한국을 못 떠나는 5 가지 이유! 한국 너무 좋아요! [만두 만담]’ that “--- things are available during the nighttime --- here almost everything is open 24 hours. I can go to the corner store, shopping, I can get food. --- I feel like I can actually have a social life and do things at nighttime --- I can actually have a life even at night”. Additionally, 2hearts1seoul (‘OLD SEOUL’ | Hanok Cafe & Rice Cake Heaven 🍡캐나다 아내가 좋아하는 떡을 찾아 종로로!’) say “come evening, the street food vendors are starting to pile their articles of food for sale”. The active nightlife is more evident on the promotional videos in e.g. the abundance of street view shots filmed with high exposure, time-lapse, and above the city from the birds-eye view. These shots prove that even after the sunset the streets are spotted with neon lights, there is as much traffic as during the day, and streets are filled with people. Some vistas are even considered more beautiful in the dark, such as the Seoulo 7017 walkway: “During nighttime this is more beautiful, the lights from the cars and the buildings are very pretty at night” (VisitSeoulTV, Beautiful Place in Seoul, ‘[뷰티플레이스]도심속에 정원이 있다?!서울로 7017로 찾아가 보자!’). Some landmarks are specifically lit up, such as the Dongdaemun Design Plaza. The street food vendors only come out during the dark hours, and shopping opportunities are plentiful. Examples of the depiction of nightlife in Seoul are visible in figures 2 and 3.



Figure 2. Vivid nightlife on the promotional videos. Figure 3. Nightlife on the UGC.

6.3 Gastronomy

Based on the UGC, eating in restaurants and street food markets is affordable and convenient in Seoul: "Usually Koreans make kimbap at home --- but these days it's cheaper to buy like this" (2hearts1seoul, 'How to Enjoy Cherry Blossoms in SEOUL 🌸캐나다-한국 국제커플이 벚꽃시즌을 즐기는 방법') and "We couldn't decide what to eat, so we just went to a Korean restaurant --- They change their menu every day, so it's just like a home-cooked meal" (2hearts1seoul, 'Week in the Life VLOG | Already Summer in Korea? [국제커플] 고양이와의 일상 & 자전거길에 연등이???'). As with shopping opportunities, the UGC showcase a number of diverse places to dine in or have take-out from, places catering to different cultures, dietary needs, price, and popularity. One single street may offer a variety of places from traditional Korean meals to Western cuisine and desserts: "There's dessert places, mandu [dumpling] places, chinese... Any kind of cuisine you'd want" (2hearts1seoul, 'OLD SEOUL' | Hanok Cafe & Rice Cake Heaven 🍡캐나다 아내가 좋아하는 떡을 찾아 종로로!), and "Sinsa-dong is just one of those places with too many places to eat, and you can't go wrong" (Marie's Kawaii World, 'Top Places to visit in Garosugil in Sinsa-dong Gangnam [가로수길]'). Street food vendors can be found anywhere, selling either fresh produce or meals cooked and eaten on the spot. Certain dishes are tied to seasons: when it is cold, spicy foods and hot broths such as tteokbokki (떡볶이) and kimchi jjigae (김치 찌개) are more popular. "You have to have this [fish cake 오뎅] when you're in Korea. It's not winter without it" (Den and Mandu, 한국에서 12 시 이후 새벽에 놀기!! 정말 못 하는게 없네!

[외국인코리아]). Accordingly, when the weather is hot, something cold and light like cold noodles served in icy broth (냉면) are favored.

Having lunch and dinner in Seoul can be much cheaper than having desserts, as proven by e.g. Marie's Kawaii World on several occasions: "Our one slice of cake cost more than our entire lunch at the ramen place – but that's café culture in Seoul" ('Top Places to visit in Garosugil in Sinsa-dong Gangnam [가로수길]'). However, dessert portions seem to be very big, almost as if they are meant for sharing with someone. Additionally, sometimes the customers pay extra solely for the atmosphere: "The foods are a bit expensive and I may even not like what is served, but I like the places because they're cute or unique." (Marie's Kawaii World, 'Mangwon | Seoul Travel Guide | Mangwon Market Street Food and Hongdae Style Cafes').

Whereas the UGC emphasize the diversity of cuisines to be found, the promotional videos focus slightly more on the traditional Korean experiences: meals with multiple small shared dishes; lively street food markets; Korean barbeque places where the meat is grilled in the middle of the table; and ingredients unique to Korea, such as injeolmi (인절미): "something you can't see in another country, because there's no injeolmi there" (VisitSeoulTV, Beautiful Place in Seoul, '[뷰티플레이스] 서울 속에 프랑스가 있다?! (살아움직이는 그림과 대화도 가능함)'). Common for both UGC and promotional videos, every portion looks ready for the social media: either they are pretty and carefully detailed or simply impressive looking.

Despite some commonalities, the two realities presented on the promotional videos and the UGC are very different. For example, on a Visit Seoul TV promotional video 'Scenic nature by BTS' Jung Kook', a couple is dining alone in a rooftop restaurant with a beautiful sunset view over the city. However, according to UGC, it seems that if a restaurant is indeed good or popular, it will be constantly filled up to the brim. If a place is famous, visited by celebrities, known on social media, or recently opened for business, there are long lines and waiting lists even before the place opens for the day. The biggest difference, however, regards Seoul's rich café culture, which is excessively present on the UGC but completely ignored on the promotional videos. The very few cafés featured on the promotional videos are far from the aesthetic or unique ones shown on the UGC.

As revealed by the UGC, café culture in Seoul is a big part of daily life and meant to offer experiences other than simply enjoying foods and drinks.

On the UGC, cafés are often visited once or more per video. The cafés seem always packed, but this could be explained by their often rather small size and therefore lack of seats. Due to the sheer volume of cafés on the UGC, they can be separated into categories such as Instagram famous, themed, interactive, specialized, traditional Korean, and regular coffee houses. The aesthetic and instagrammable cafés consider every detail in décor, color schemes, tableware, visuals of the pastries and foodstuffs and music and lighting, ensuring that every single detail is cohesive with the chosen atmosphere and looks aesthetically pleasing or interesting on the social media. Social media-friendliness is more important than the taste of the menu items: "In my opinion, every café requires its own Instagrammable menu item" (Marie's Kawaii World, 'Yeonnam-dong is a Top Korean Hipster Neighborhood') and café Understated is "one of those aesthetic cafés where there's no real place to sit" (Cari Cakes, 'Spring Weekend in Seoul | Esports, Vintage Shops, and Cafes VLOG') where the coffee comes in a glass jug and the walls look halfway demolished.



Figure 4. Café Zapangi is famous on Instagram for e.g. its pink vending machine entrance.
Figure 5. Café Understated's decor looks like it is under construction.

Strongly themed cafés follow a specific theme to the T, such as Café Yeonnam-Dong entirely in black and white to appear as if the customer has entered a two-dimensional drawing, and at 'Café Kitsune' (Japanese for 'fox'), everything is fox-shaped or -themed.

With aesthetic and themed cafés, uniqueness and great attention to detail is required and expected by the customers: "Because we're in Korea, my standards were high, and I was underwhelmed by this café – it's not magical enough to be a magical café" (Marie's Kawaii World, 'Mangwon | Seoul Travel Guide | Mangwon Market Street Food and Hongdae Style Cafes'). Interactive cafés may have e.g. board games, comic books or movies played on the walls; specialized places are known for one specific food item, such as ice cream parlors serving only different green tea flavors; and traditional cafés are built into traditional hanok houses, serve traditional Korean tea and snacks, and the customers are seated by low tables on the floor. As with the activities, children are not necessarily welcome: "Surprisingly, many cafés and restaurants in this area are no kids zones --- they don't allow kids inside --- a growing phenomenon in Korea" (Marie's Kawaii World, 'Yeonnam-dong is a Top Korean Hipster Neighborhood').

6.4 Tangible and intangible heritage

The promotional videos may lack in featuring the café culture, but when it comes to showcasing historical buildings, monuments, and museums, it is the other way around. Almost none of the UGC show these tangible demonstrations of Korean heritage, or at least ones recognizable without an explicit reference to them. The minute references to the tangible and intangible heritage on the UGC feature the Bukcheon Hanok Village area of traditional Korean guest houses and buildings; Gwanghwamun, the biggest gate of Gyeongbokgung palace built to protect Seoul; palaces and temples emblazoned with Chinese hanja characters that precede the Korean hangul characters; Gwanmoonsa temple adorned with paper lanterns for Buddha's birthday; traditional hanbok-garments even tourists can rent for a day; traditional tea houses with the low tables and pillows for chairs; meals consisting of several small dishes and sharing food with friends; and the Seoul Museum of Art. Bits and pieces of history are offered in conversations in passing, such as when shopping for sweets: "Only kings used to eat those kinds [of rice cakes] because they're the best, or when walking in an older neighborhood "This laundry place is airing out these traditional garments that I've never seen on display --- they're for ceremonies and stuff? For a funeral? Or what your grandpa wears for ancestral worship?" " (2hearts1seoul, 'OLD SEOUL' | Hanok Cafe & Rice Cake Heaven 🍡캐나다 아내가 좋아하는 떡을 찾아 종로로!'.) Even though all these elements of Korean heritage are

presented on the UGC, they lose in frequency and intensity on the promotional videos. In addition to the same elements featuring on the UGC, the promotional videos showcase several modern landmarks, such as N Seoul Tower; Namsan tower; Seoul Gallery; and Dongdaemun Design Plaza, called the “heart of fashion”.

The abundance of historically and culturally significant buildings and monuments on the promotional videos emphasize how the landmarks exist amidst Seoul residents’ daily lives, connecting history to the modern-day: ornate pavilions, fortresses, palaces, and for example the Gwanghwamun gate (the main gate of the Gyeongbokgung palace) are located right next to busy streets. In Bukcheon Hanok village area one can rent a traditional costume and wander amidst the traditional houses – the foreign girls on the videos dressed in hanboks emphasize that it is appropriate for foreigners as well, not only for Koreans – and upon visiting the Boshingak belfry one can ring the ancient bell. The Gyeongbokgung palace gates have survived through foreign occupation, war, and rapid industrial development to this day, therefore representing an important piece of tangible man-made heritage. Furthermore, the city of Seoul was founded between the mountains and the Han River, both of which are considered as important landmarks and parts of the city’s identity (Machin, 2014).

The connection of history and modern-day is evident on the UGC as well: UGC creator Den and Mandu says “I love how Korea incorporates that very traditional history with the modern-day life: K-pop and K-Beauty --- if you walk down the streets of Seoul, you'll see this beautiful palace among the whole city life, which I think is a really cool juxtaposition --- shows the rich history --- it's like finding lost treasures within a busy busy city" (외국인이 한국을 못 떠나는 5 가지 이유! 한국 너무 좋아요! [만두 만담]). The promotional videos state: "This city is rapidly changing, it's developing quickly but also preserving its culture inside" (Seoul City Official, I.Seoul.U., ‘I, You and Seoul: #5 Seoul is harmony’), "At the same time, there is passion and energy that one sees in the city of Seoul, creating entirely new things in fashion, music, or diverse cultural production areas" (Seoul City Official, I.Seoul.U., ‘I, You and Seoul: #8 Seoul is coexistence’) and "I was very impressed with this culture that maintains original aspects while adding a new sense" (Seoul City Official, “A special city for you and me!”).



Figure 6. The gates of the royal palace are in the middle of a busy street.

Both the promotional videos and the UGC also express concern and care for preserving history and traditions. The UGC creators express their worry over the traditional culture disappearing under modernity, e.g. "It's sad that nowadays you can't see a lot this kind of traditional roofs" (2hearts1seoul, 'OLD SEOUL' | Hanok Cafe & Rice Cake Heaven 🍡캐나다 아내가 좋아하는 떡을 찾아 종로로!). The care for the old is also evident on the videos in building around the history instead of tearing it down, e.g. mentions of protecting the old hanok houses and leaving the old Hangdong railway track in the middle of the city: "instead of being torn down, was completely reformed" (Seoul City Official, "Seoul, a special city for you and me!"); converting an old warehouse into a cultural exhibit site with interactive elements, sometimes called the Brooklyn of Seoul; and the Seoulllo 7017 highway: "while changing this place from a highway overpass into a pedestrian road, they didn't destroy the history of this place" (VisitSeoulTV, Beautiful Place in Seoul, '뷰티플레이스' 감성폭발! 항동철길에서 추억사진 찍기!).

On the UGC, traditional instruments, art forms, clothing, food, and history are subtly present and visible in the background, not explicitly emphasized as the main thing to do, see, or experience. For this reason, some landmarks and monuments may have gone unnoticed. In contrast, on the promotional videos history and culture seem to have a shock value at times: there are unique traditional instruments, a horde of drummers in hanboks, a man trying acupuncture with several long needles stuck into his face, and a woman in hanbok playing a traditional Korean instrument in the middle of the modern Dongdaemun Design Plaza. The promotional videos also reveal a more diverse range of Korean culture

in terms of music: the videos feature artists singing both traditional Korean and classical music, playing traditional Korean and classical instruments, DJ's at the nightclubs playing electronic dance music, and k-pop artists. The UGC, however, is music-wise focused solely on k-pop, although covering every aspect of enjoying the Korean pop industry from going to concerts, knowing fan chants, buying fan merchandise, singing the popular songs in karaoke, and showing k-pop group posters on shop window displays. Since k-pop is increasingly becoming a big global phenomenon and not just something Koreans themselves enjoy, it is understandable that the promotional videos emphasize k-pop as well. For example, the STO's 'I Seoul U (with BTS)' -campaign is narrated by and revolves around a globally famous k-pop group BTS, the group's members presenting diverse activities and experiences to be had in Seoul. These artists are attractive to both locals and foreigners, therefore increasing the locals' attachment to their city identity and strengthening foreigners' will to visit the city someday, either to experience the things these artists are promoting or in hopes of meeting the artists themselves.

6.5 Cityscape and general infrastructure

Seoul consists of 25 districts, further divided into neighborhoods. These areas have diverse architecture and cityscape: some with only sleek, modern, and towering office buildings, some tight and narrow spaces, others a fusion of old and new. Some are located on steep hills with endless stairs, some have large parks and artificial water elements. In some areas like Yeonnam-dong, streets are so small that often they are not shown on maps. This diversity of cityscape and infrastructure makes it difficult to construct a unified city brand for Seoul city.

Based on the UGC, it can be said that the less modern areas often have powerlines hanging low above the streets and mazes of narrow alleys and stairs. Hannam-dong area, for example, elicits comments such as "Korea sometimes – actually a lot of times: sketchy." (YO' HOMEGIRL, 'Summer in Seoul ᄇᆞᆫ(<ᆡ)ᄇ | Weekend in Seoul') Street food markets are common, selling both complete meals and fresh ingredients, and are frequented by locals as well as tourists. Narrow and unmarked backstreet alleys expanding from the main streets are frequently recommended options for finding great restaurants, shops, and unique places: "You want to get lost in the neighborhood's back streets and alleyways"

(Marie's Kawaii World, 'Top Places to visit in Garosugil in Sinsa-dong Gangnam [가로수길]').

Some neighborhoods are a purposeful fusion of old and new: "I love how in this neighborhood they preserve the old buildings and just change the interior" (Marie's Kawaii World, 'Yeonnam-dong is a Top Korean Hipster Neighborhood'), and the modern side of Seoul is visible in e.g. the abundance of services and amenities. Convenience stores can be spotted regularly, often with stalls up the front selling fresh fruit. UGC creator Den and Mandu describes the convenience of Seoul as follows: "Not only are there convenience stores everywhere --- there's also quickService. The delivery service is amazing, you can get food within an hour – even ice cream – and the technology is just insane, it's always the latest technology --- the subway system is absolutely amazing --- the bus is coming regularly" (외국인이 한국을 못 떠나는 5 가지 이유! 한국 너무 좋아요! [만두 만담]). In addition to the street level, shopping opportunities, cafés, and services can be located in the well-lit underground tunnels or high above the ground, after climbing several flights of stairs on the outside of the buildings. Some areas have a concentration of people, loudspeakers, and neon lights. Especially 노래방 – neon signs (karaoke room) can be spotted all over the city. Murals seem common in all areas, both artistic ones, and ones designed for taking photos with, such as angel wings. Photo spots are a common feature of the city, as exemplified in figures 7 and 8.



Figures 7 and 8. A bakery and a pizza restaurant have designated photo spots outside.

One of the oldest neighborhoods in Seoul is visited by several UGC creators and presented by promotional videos as well. Ikseon-Dong's traditional hanok houses with wooden built, unique roofs, courtyards, and sliding doors show a 600-year-old urban environment: "Seoul is a super huge city, there's 10 million people in it, but I love that these kinds of neighborhoods still exist" (2hearts1seoul, 'OLD SEOUL' | Hanok Cafe & Rice Cake Heaven 🍡캐나다 아내가 좋아하는 떡을 찾아 종로로!'). Some visitors dress up in the fashion of the previous centuries and take photos of themselves in settings both natural and specifically provided by store owners. UGC creator Marie's Kawaii World describes how the area has maintained its originality throughout the years: "Despite its gentrification, it hasn't turned into those trendy places where you see a k-beauty shop every two doors like in Garosugil. It's not very touristy yet, so you won't see a lot of foreigners. What you will see is affluent Korean ladies in their 60s having lunch together, college students, and a lot of couples out on dates." ('Walking Tour of Ikseon-Dong, Seoul's Hippest Neighborhood Korea').

While the UGC mainly shows Seoul city on the street level, the promotional videos have beautiful birds-eye shots and time-lapses from above the city. These shots present in full view the bustle of the streets, the brightness of the neon signs and lights after sundown, and the traffic that never ceases. The promotional videos also feature beautiful natural and man-made skylines of e.g. the sun setting over the Han river and the silhouettes of skyscrapers. The majority of the promotional video shots of the cityscape seem to be focused around sunrise or sunset. In addition to the scenic shots, the promotional videos show people constantly interacting with the city itself: a group of girls taking photos of themselves in a big square, a mother playing with a child in a fountain, and laughing teenagers cycling down a tree-lined hill. Even when the shots are focused on Korean hanok houses, narrow alleys, and decorative windowpanes, the skyscrapers and mountains are visible in the distance. As mentioned in chapter 6.1, despite of its status as a global city, Seoul preserves a constant connection to nature. There are several big parks in the middle of the city and greenery all around, either as planned parts of the city infrastructure or peeking from peoples' backyards, balconies, and windowsills. This is common for both the UGC and the promotional videos.

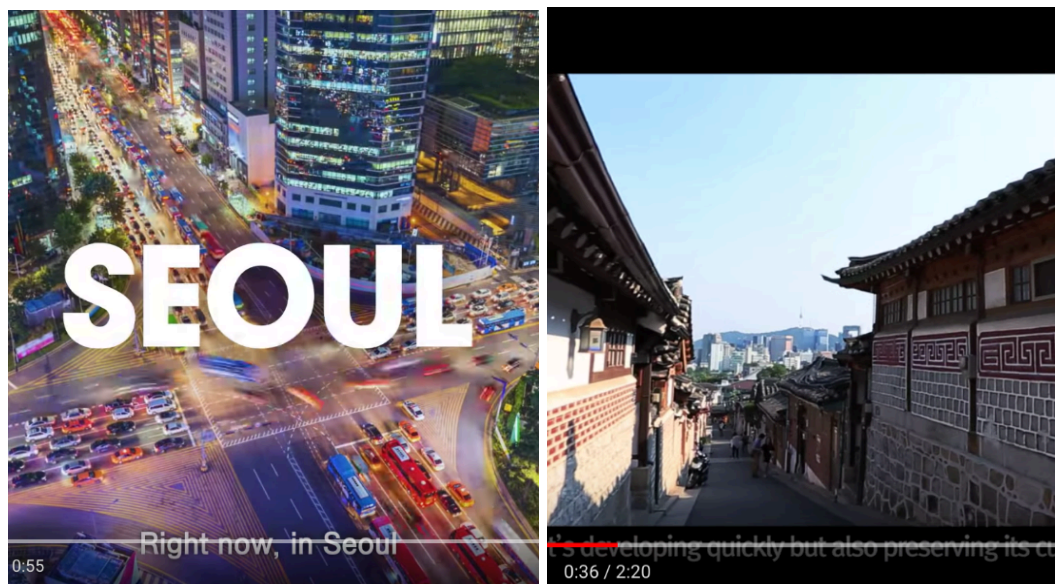


Figure 9. An example of a reoccurring shot emphasizing the vibrancy and energy of Seoul from above.

Figure 10. A street view of traditional houses at Ikseon-Dong with skyscrapers and the mountains visible in the distance.

One major difference between the UGC and the promotional videos regards public amenities and public transportation. Neither are visible nor mentioned on the promotional videos, and no daily necessities seem to exist in the promotional Seoul. The promotional videos only imply that it is easy to move around in Seoul on foot, because "Seoul is walking distance" (Seoul City Official, I.Seoul.U., 'I, You and Seoul: #9 Seoul is dynamic') and the majority of places are said to be located near some public transportation station. As for the UGC, the situation is completely different. The content creators use nearly all modes of transportation from buses to electric scooters. Subway stations seem big, clean, modern, and well-lit. Both the subway and the buses have stops in English as well as in Korean. Therefore, Seoul public transportation seems abundant and reliable. Cycling seems an easy and common way to get around, as well. Based on the UGC, walking is also a convenient way to get around. Many streets are dedicated to cyclists or pedestrians only. Depending on the area, attractions are either clustered or at a hefty distance: "Gangnam is a large area where everything is really spread out, so if you don't have a car you need to get a cab, but Garosugil is one area where everything is close together and trendy and cool" (Marie's Kawaii World, 'Top Places to visit in Garosugil in Sinsa-dong Gangnam [가로수길]'). Accessibility does not seem to concern Seoul

since many areas have steep hills and stairs, which are not accessible with e.g. wheelchairs or strollers. There are neither mentions of accessibility nor are people with disabilities shown at any point. This is common for both the UGC and the promotional videos.

One finding specifically arose from analyzing the UGC. Even though moving around the city is relatively easy, based on the UGC it seems that finding the destinations is always not: "I always get lost in here, so I'm gonna put the camera down and figure out where on earth I am" (Cari Cakes, 'Being grumpy and sick in seoul VLOG | museums, book stores, cafes'). However, for some, getting lost in the small alleys seems to be the thing: "It's easy to get lost in here, but it's part of the fun" (2hearts1seoul, 'OLD SEOUL' | Hanok Cafe & Rice Cake Heaven 🍡캐나다 아내가 좋아하는 떡을 찾아 종로로!'), and "You want to get lost in the neighborhood's back streets and alleyways --- you'll find cool gems of cafés, restaurants and shops" (Marie's Kawaii World, 'Top Places to visit in Garosugil in Sinsa-dong Gangnam [가로수길]'). Many UGC creators exclaim that they are trying to find a specific place and hope they will not get lost, some of the smallest streets are not visible on the maps, and many streets do not have any street signs on them. When finally finding the place, it can unexpectedly be closed, shut down for renovations, or moved place, like e.g. 2hearts1seoul trying to find a rice museum, which turned out to be under construction for unknown reasons ('OLD SEOUL' | Hanok Cafe & Rice Cake Heaven 🍡캐나다 아내가 좋아하는 떡을 찾아 종로로!'), and Cari Cakes ('Some Solo Time in Wintery Seoul, Korea | Vlog ft Ana Luisa') finding the sought-after place hooded with a tarpaulin: "Off to a great start – the place I wanted to show you is not only closed, but it's hella closed".

One of the main things in common with the UGC and the promotional videos is that prices and expenses of the city are not featured on the videos. On the UGC, most of the mentions on prices state that it is often cheaper to have lunch or dinner than desserts at a café, and "Gas, water, electricity, data is cheaper [than in Canada], food is MUCH cheaper. --- We can go out and eat and it's not going to break the bank, and it's a good meal, transportation is really cheap as well" (Den and Mandu, '외국인이 한국을 못 떠나는 5 가지 이유! 한국 너무 좋아요! [만두 만담]'). On the promotional videos, cost and expenses are understandably not mentioned at all. The videos seem to take great care in showing

diverse activities which all can be enjoyed by diverse stakeholders, presumably in efforts to show that Seoul caters to all kinds of budgets and interests, locals and visitors alike. However, low-budget visitors may encounter disappointments when the expectations created by the promotional videos do not match reality. For example, as mentioned previously, the karaoke places featured on the promotional videos are big and stylish, whereas on the UGC they are tight and bare spaces. This implies that the places featured on the promotional videos are probably more expensive than the ones common on the UGC. This phenomenon could apply to other things featured on the promotional videos as well.

Another similarity is the aspect of safety. The UGC creators, all women and the majority moving about alone, move freely throughout the day. "I've never been to a country that is 100% safe --- Compared to Canada, I feel much safer here in Korea. --- I can leave my things at a café, give my order and then come back and my things are still there --- and Korea has no guns." (Den and Mandu, ‘외국인이 한국을 못 떠나는 5 가지 이유! 한국 너무 좋아요! [만두 만담]’). Were the UGC creators scared of walking alone or in the dark, they would likely avoid poorly lit streets completely or be vocal about the safety, such as Hijab in Korea (‘Mini Weekend Vlog | Finding Halal Barbeque in Hongdae!’). While vlogging at an empty parking lot area during night-time, a man kept staring at her. She stated that she was holding the camera so that it would “get his face” was there any trouble. This was the only incident where a concern for safety was expressed on both the UGC and the promotional videos. The promotional videos verify the safety with captions such as “safe trip home service for women, safety and consideration for women anytime anywhere” (Seoul City Official, I.Seoul.U., ‘I, You and Seoul: #1 Seoul is like a mother’).

6.6 Social environment

Based on the UGC, it is possible to get by in Seoul by only relying on English. On the UGC, the main language spoken is English, with occasional conversations with street food or clothes vendors in Korean. Majority of public transportation signs and stops are written and announced in both Korean and English, many restaurant menus are written in two languages or have pictures of the portions to accommodate those not familiar with the language. Some locals will respond in English even when the UGC producers know

Korean: "Today is just the day for really nice chatty people --- even though I told her I can speak Korean, she tried to speak English and she was so cute" (Cari Cakes, 'Spring Weekend in Seoul | Esports, Vintage Shops, and Cafes VLOG').

However, one should not count on always having options in English, and possible translations provided may not be accurate. For example, public places such as museums tend to have the main information available in English, but the exhibitions itself seem to be in Korean only. Several cafés and restaurants have incorrect or nonsensical names and menu items, such as 'Manufact Coffee Roasters'. Extra services, such as the possibility to create an own lipstick shade in a cosmetic store, are usually offered in Korean only. In Korean conversations, the locals seem very helpful and give many compliments: "I wish I had a pretty daughter like you, I only have two sons" (Den and Mandu, '한국에서 12 시 이후 새벽에 놀기!! 정말 못 하는게 없네! [외국인코리아]'). Getting discounts while shopping is also possible for those knowledgeable in Korean: "Usually when you shop, you can ask for a discount --- she gave me a really good discount!" (Den and Mandu, '한국에서 12 시 이후 새벽에 놀기!! 정말 못 하는게 없네! [외국인코리아]'). It could be said that these nice encounters happen to only those competent in Korean. However, the videos prove that the UGC producer encounters with locals are positive, no matter whether in Korean or English. Even when the UGC producers do not speak Korean, encounters with locals seem nothing but friendly, such as when a street vendor complimented 2hearts1seoul as being a good-looking interracial couple ('"OLD SEOUL' | Hanok Cafe & Rice Cake Heaven 🍡캐나다 아내가 좋아하는 떡을 찾아 종로로!'). Not all friendliness depends on verbal interaction, for e.g. elderly Koreans and street food vendors seem happy to communicate via gestures. For example, one vendor slipped extra skewers on a portion for free. (Den and Mandu, '전통시장 먹방과 직접 만든 막걸리에 취하다. 진짜 로컬과 떠나는 여행! [외국인코리아]'). The promotional videos concur with the idea of life being enjoyable even without Korean language skills: "I like living in Korea --- even though my Korean is limited" (Seoul City Official, I.Seoul.U, 'I, You and Seoul: #9 Seoul is dynamic').

However, some verbal cues indicate that friendliness above a normal service industry attentiveness is not necessarily too common. UGC creator Cari Cakes, for example, notes several times that she's not used to people being so nice and overly friendly to her in

Seoul: "The guy who owns it [the café] is so nice. He was actually like chatting with every single person --- which is very rare and something I miss very much from American culture" ('Spring Weekend in Seoul | Esports, Vintage Shops, and Cafes VLOG').

Whereas the UGC are spoken in English, the promotional videos are mainly spoken in Korean with subtitles in English embedded to the videos. The foreign interviewees speak English, but it is not their first language. The promotional videos emphasize the friendliness of locals much more than the UGC. On the promotional videos, locals are helping foreigners and teaching them e.g. traditional dance, singing, and pottery. Everyone is always laughing with others or smiling to people around them. However, it is never implicitly stated what language is being used in these encounters. If the language of communication is e.g. only English or only Korean, it instantly rules out people who have no such language skills, therefore most likely leading to more awkward real-life encounters in Seoul. This concern is ruled out by several promotional videos: on 'I, You and Seoul: #2 Seoul is smiling', the narrator says: "Seoulites are so open, laughing and smiling, it's really easy to have contact with Korean people" and the embedded captions say: "I think Korean people are friendly" (Seoul City Official, I.Seoul.U). Another video states that "people are very open, active, and participative" (Seoul City Official, I.Seoul.U, 'I, You and Seoul: #9 Seoul is dynamic'), and on 'I, You and Seoul: #8 Seoul is coexistence' the Director of Asia institute states that, indeed, for him, "Seoul is coexistence".

One notable difference between the promotional videos and the UGC is the heritage of the people featured on the videos. The people visible on the UGC rarely seem to be of any heritage other than Asian, whereas the promotional videos feature a wide variety of diverse ethnic backgrounds. This diversity creates an image of Seoul as a global hubbub, where anyone is welcome to enjoy their time despite their cultural or geographical background. This is visible on several of the promotional videos, one of them declaring Seoul as a city of "passion, energy, youth, communication, co-existence" (Seoul City Official, I.Seoul.U, 'I, You and Seoul: #6 Seoul is Pop Art'), another as having "respect between individuals, righteousness and benevolence for all adults and children -- past present, future, seniors, youths, and children participate and embrace each other in Seoul" (Seoul City Official, I.Seoul.U, 'I, You and Seoul: #7 Seoul is benevolence, righteousness, propriety and wisdom'), and a third one as "a place where we can find

coexistence and mutual stimulation of different traditions and lifestyles -- between those who want to do something different and those who want to keep the tradition and the old city" (Seoul City Official, I.Seoul.U, 'I, You and Seoul: #8 Seoul is Coexistence').

6.7 Layout, design and sonic signifiers

As argued in chapter 4.1, design, layout, verbal and sonic signifiers of the videos play a role in forming the city image and brand. When comparing UGC and promotional videos, there is a significant difference in the amount and frequency of published video content. The UGC creators may publish a new video of 5-35 minutes in length several times in a week, whereas the length and number of promotional videos produced in a year are significantly lower. The promotional videos range from 30 seconds to six minutes in length, an approximate amount of three to ten videos per campaign. Since the promotional videos must show a massive amount of information in a very short timeframe, it is natural that the selection of scenes is executed with more care than on the UGC.

Both the UGC and the promotional videos do share the practice of editing the published content, and choosing what elements to leave out, what to include and how it is visually represented has a major impact on the city image. However, a major difference with the promotional videos and the UGC is that the latter does not intentionally aim to present Seoul in a certain light or to lure audiences to act in a certain way after seeing the video. Boosting or creating the city image merely happens as a byproduct while introducing aspects of the content producers' lives that they deem interesting, fun or something people would like to or should see. For promotional videos, editing the visuals and the sounds of a video is a crucial way to enhance the messages they wish to convey. For example, the "Seoul, a special city for you and me!" videos' upbeat music combined with fast cuts from one pretty and enjoyable scene to another emphasize the promotional videos' effort to make Seoul appear as a place full of joy, excitement, and future adventures, and therefore fitting their tagline "A city in which you want to stay, live and invest" (Seoul City Official).

In terms of sonic signifiers, the promotional videos rely on a soundtrack much more than the UGC. Promotional video themes are enforced with appropriate accompanying music,

such as in the STO's I Seoul U (With BTS)) series: 'Old But New by BTS' RM' with a mix of modern and traditional music, 'Recharge by BTS' SUGA' with slow-tempo atmospheric music, and 'Exciting Moments by BTS' j-hope' with upbeat electronic dance music. Music covers up any other sonic signifiers such as possible conversations unless they are intended to be heard, for example emphasizing nature with birds singing, the energy of the city with cars speeding by, or people laughing out loud. The UGC also uses music to enhance a certain mood on the videos, but it is also used to cover up unwanted and distracting noises such as loud traffic or strong wind. The music varies from instrumental beats to songs of different genres, chosen by the content creators by unknown criteria. Even though sonic signifiers and music are important in creating a city image, the most interesting findings concern layout and design choices.

Seoul is a big city with multiple different areas that each have their own characteristics. Focusing on too few characteristics would alienate too many stakeholder groups but focus on too many would end up catering to no-one specifically. To solve this dilemma, Seoul promotional videos utilize synecdoche to condense the city into a couple of highly visual components of the Seoul landscape. A restored or newly constructed building such as the Dongdaemun Design Plaza, a monument such as the Gyeongbokgung palace or a specially zoned district such as Gangnam stands for the whole city, making managing and representing the city image to several external audiences easier. (Machin, 2014.) The selected synecdoche have the ability to increase awareness and reinforce images and are strong enough to be used as a basis for telling the story of the city (Kottler & Gertner, 2002). The synecdoche are the pieces that are deemed of most value to the city but may easily create an unrealistic image of the city or be completely rejected by internal stakeholders like the citizens. As the promotional videos present Seoul city as a whole, it is understandable that the UGC is able to provide more in-depth details of specific interesting spots and phenomena. This may be the reason for SMG and STO having several different styles of the promotional video series: STO's 'I Seoul U (with BTS)' -series condenses the whole city in videos of one minute, whereas the 'Beautiful Place in Seoul' -series takes the viewer on a more detailed tour to only a few selected places. Similarly, SMG's "'Seoul, a special city for you and me!'" series consists of a myriad of diverse city elements presented in a fast tempo, whereas the 'I, You and Seoul' -series introduces the city from a very limited perspective of one person.

The usage of language is also a sign of design. As the promotional videos are clearly scripted, only essential and meaningful things are left on the videos. Therefore, the language on the promotional videos is notably richer than on the UGC. Even on STO's 'Beautiful Place in Seoul' videos where the main actor leads the viewers on tours around the city, she occasionally seems to be citing things from memory or reading them from a teleprompter, making her speech flow less naturally. On the UGC, everything is uttered in an unplanned and conversational manner, the purpose of which is often nothing more than simply filling the silence.

Another major difference between the UGC and the promotional videos is the usage of taglines. All promotional videos make a point of having a tagline that runs through the video series, which is one of the tools for successful place branding (Kottler & Gertner, 2002). Some taglines have blanks that can be filled with a different thematic word assigned to each video. These words can completely change the overall image and atmosphere of the individual videos but still keep them as a part of the whole. For example, all videos in the STO's 'I Seoul U (with BTS)' series share the lines 'CREATE SEOUL' and 'Live Seoul like I do', but each video is assigned a unique theme and theme words such as 'exciting moments', 'recharge', or 'old but new'. For SMG, all the videos in the 'Seoul, a special city for you and me!' – series share the line "A city in which you want to [blank]". The individual videos are assigned words such as "stay", "live", and "invest". All the promotional videos also share hashtags to be used when sharing the experiences on social media, thereby creating a sense of community and togetherness amongst travelers and contributing to organic dissemination of the chosen Seoul spots. Neither taglines nor hashtags are used in the UGC, making them feel, in this sense, less cohesive than the promotional videos.

In addition to the editing and the textual elements, the main actors and the way of addressing the viewers matter. As mentioned in chapter 5, vlogging is a video format emphasizing liveness and conversation, creating a sense of two-way communication between the viewer and the content creator (Burgess & Green, 2018). Therefore, following or listening to a real individual on the video has more potential to make an impact on the viewer. Accordingly, this implies that the more voiceovers are used on the video, the more one-way communication and less personal the content feels. With no visible main actor directly addressing the viewer and sharing the experiences, the videos

may feel less genuine and real and more like pure advertising. The promotional videos have tried to solve the problem in various ways: STO's 'Beautiful Place in Seoul' -series follow the same woman on her adventures in the city, the 'I Seoul U (with BTS)' -series has the famous boy band members giving introductions to the videos, and SMG's 'I, You and Seoul' -series have interviewed known artists and famous persons and have them narrate the videos. The "Seoul, a special city for you and me!" series has tried to incorporate following an individual's adventures in the city, voiceover narration throughout the videos, and all the videos begin with an embedded text "SEOUL presents". This simple method gives the viewer a sensation of the imagery being presented by the personified city itself, and not some marketing organization or company. This way, the following messages and imagery feel more organic than they actually are.

In contrast, the majority of UGC creators talk straight to the camera and therefore to their audiences, addressing the viewers directly. Of all the UGC channels in this study, only 2hearts1seoul has two content creators discussing with each other as well. When a content creator speaks to the camera as if having a conversation with the viewer, the impact of what is being said and shown feels more personal. It also insinuates that the things shown are something a relatable real-life person, not a faceless organization, deems worth sharing for. An ordinary citizen as a spokesperson on a promotional video may help viewers to assimilate and imagine themselves doing and experiencing the same things as on screen. On the other hand, in order for the viewers to watch a whole video of a stranger, the viewers must be interested in the person or what they have to say. Choosing a celebrity as a spokesperson may help to attract a bigger audience, but in addition to encouraging fans to emulate their favorite celebrities, the celebrities may become unpopular or may be known to only locals or niche audiences. The city spokespersons on SMG's '[I·SEOUL·U] I, You and Seoul' series are all famous individuals, but not necessarily globally known. For example, actor Choi Bool-Am may be a well-known star in Korea, making his insights appealing to his fans. To those who do not know of him, he is simply an old Korean man sharing his thoughts.

7. Conclusions and implications

This chapter will first answer the research questions by forming conclusions based on the

analysis of the UGC and the promotional videos. Several differences and communalities are found and explained. Then, the implications of these findings are explained. Finally, some proposals for further studies are made.

7.1 Answering the first research question

Based on the analysis, four major differences in the projection of Seoul city brand between UGC and the promotional videos are found: representation of different seasons, nature as a tool, diversity of the city, and shopping and café culture as experiences. These four major differences are elements of the Seoul city brand that especially stand out and are a major part of either the UGC or the promotional videos. Additionally, five minor differences include family-orientation; emphasizing events; the focus of food and cuisine; public amenities, public transportation and getting to places; and prices. The minor differences are not as striking as the major ones, but important to mention, nonetheless. These differences answer to the first research question:

1. How does the Seoul city brand projected by the Seoul Tourism Organization (STO) and the Seoul Metropolitan Government (SMG) promotional videos differ from the city brand projected by user-generated content on YouTube?

The first major difference between the UGC and promotional videos representation of Seoul concerns the representation of different seasons. As the analysis points out, the promotional videos have omitted both the distinct four seasons of Seoul and the transitional periods between the seasons, presenting only the best parts of what is considered attractive seasons in a city setting: the height of Spring and lovely summertime. Winter, for example, is not featured on the promotional videos even though snow is a common occurrence in Seoul. Perhaps the amount of snow is not enough to be deemed attractive as would be the case in a winter sports destination. As opposed to the lack of seasons on the promotional videos, the UGC reveals the distinctiveness of Seoul's seasons. In addition to the lovely elements emphasized by the promotional videos, the UGC showcases the unattractive extreme temperatures and weather patterns, such as consecutive days of intense rain, freezing wind, or high temperatures that are tough to bear.

The second major difference detected is using nature as a tool. As with the seasons, the promotional videos only show beautiful vistas and the most attractive times of the day, such as the sunsets. The pretty views, places, and natural elements are deliberately used to attract viewers, to create awe, and to create a need to experience the locations on the spot. Nature and its elements are not solely for those who enjoy outdoor activities along the lines of camping or trekking, but also for the people who e.g. get inspired by beauty, enjoy photographing or want a small break from the concrete jungle. This approach is completely opposite to the UGC, where nature is not specifically emphasized or paid an excessive amount of attention to. The environment is simply there as a background for the main focus of the videos.

The practices on the promotional videos regarding these two major differences concur with the ideas of place brand communication presented in chapter 2.2. The city attributes chosen on the promotional videos are solely appealing and memorable, and Seoul's natural resources are clearly chosen as one of the focal points of promoting the city. The imagery is very visual and reoccurring, such as the sunrises and the Han river, which also seem to represent the essence of the city.

The third major difference is how the diversity of Seoul city is presented in the videos. On the promotional videos, differences between the multiple districts and areas of Seoul are narrowed down and simplified in juxtapositions such as old and new, traditional and modern, urban and natural, or energetic and calm. The city is presented in a pre-planned and deliberate manner, limiting the view to only the most interesting, attractive, exciting and polished streets, places and areas. The cityscape is as much the focus of the promotional videos as any other attraction, vista, or activity. The promotional videos use only a few chosen scenic shots to highlight the beauty, energy, and opportunities of Seoul. As Joo and Seo (2018) argue in chapter 2, it is too easy for place marketers to turn a blind eye to the city's diversity and its less attractive realities. As the videos show ordinary people in only unique and extraordinary settings, it may create a false image of Seoul as consisting of only wonderful environments, simultaneously dismissing e.g. the local needs of an important stakeholder group: the citizens. As explained in chapter 2, this characteristic points towards an older conception of city branding as a one-way communication tool that the place marketers control and with which they dictate what is

essential about Seoul city. If the presented city elements are not consistent with the stakeholders' perceptions, the city brand is at risk of being rejected by its stakeholder groups.

Some unattractive features are understandably omitted from the promotional videos. For example, the occasionally obtrusive noise pollution is most likely canceled out by the constant background music. Even though this happens occasionally with the UGC as well, the UGC creators do not try to cover up the inconvenient and unattractive elements. On the UGC, their existence is acknowledged with e.g. verbal cues. The UGC proves that reality is different from the promotional videos. As the content creators move about the city, their footage shows the ordinary street-level Seoul which a visitor and a citizen would also encounter while in the city, daily necessities such as convenience stores and public transportation included. When the plain or unattractive areas and details of the city are not separated from the beautiful ones, the diversity of Seoul cityscape is more natural and multi-dimensional than the one presented by the promotional videos.

Finally, the fourth major difference is considering shopping and café culture as experiences. As argued in chapter 2, a strong city brand must have a uniform voice and message coming from the place promoters, but it must also concur with the perceptions of the diverse stakeholders to be successful. Therefore, given that shopping is such a prevalent element on the UGC, its non-existence on the promotional videos is conspicuous. The UGC present shopping as a part of all areas of daily life, but on the promotional videos, the focus is decidedly on any other activity and aspect of Seoul. The promotional videos seem to rely on consuming experiences rather than goods. However, the UGC proves that the shops in Seoul have diverse interactive elements, activities, and curiosities, making it difficult not to consider shopping as a major experience as well. Similar to the presentation of shopping, café culture forms a major characteristic of Seoul on the UGC, whereas on the promotional videos it is non-existent. Upon discovering the diversity of the café culture on the UGC, the lack of representation on the promotional videos seems strange. Many cafés in Seoul go viral and are globally recognized on the internet. As such, they are remarkable attractions for Seoul city. One explanation for the lack of representation on the promotional videos could be if STO and SMG are forbidden to promote singular privately-owned businesses, or that the turnover of cafés is so rapid that it would be a mistake to promote a place that might not be in business a year later.

As for the minor differences, the first one is family-orientation. The promotional videos feature families with small children visiting attractions together and playing in public areas. From these brief encounters, one can gather that Seoul is a nice place for children as well. However, the UGC announces that it is a growing phenomenon in Seoul to ban children of a certain age from entering restaurants, cafés, or shops. These two findings are conflicting. The attractions the promotional videos show in conjunction with children are not seen in any other video, not even on the UGC. These singular occasions make it feel as though the few attractions and activities are exceptions to a norm where Seoul is not the most suitable city for small children. However, the research material includes only one UGC channel featuring and addressing topics related to children. Therefore, this finding could possibly change with a bigger sample.

The second minor difference is emphasizing events. On the promotional videos, events are emphasized and made to seem much more common than on the UGC. The promotional video events like concerts, water gun festivals and art festivals are attended by big crowds and brought to light as major and anticipated events, whereas hardly any UGC attends an event or features one besides passing by or mentioning them. However, even though the content creators themselves do not attend any events, these offhanded mentions and appearances of events prove that there are many popular events in Seoul that do gather big crowds. Therefore, the found difference here is the enthusiastic way in which the promotional videos emphasize the significance of Seoul events.

The third minor difference is the point of focus on food and cuisine. Food is in an important role in both the UGC and the promotional videos. It is an activity and experience among others, and the options are not limited to cuisine, city district, or time of the day. Additionally, the Korean food culture is considered unique and valued, and the quality, affordability, and availability of street food are praised on both UGC and promotional videos. That being said, what is different between the UGC and the promotional video is the focus with which the food experiences are presented. The promotional videos are more focused on the traditional Korean cuisine, from serving a table full of small shareable dishes to Korean barbeque where the meat is grilled in the middle of the dining table, dipped into sauces and wrapped into leaves. The promotional videos also bring up Korean ingredients like injeolmi. The UGC strives for presenting the

variety of cuisine as opposed to its exclusiveness to Korea. There is an option for any craving from sushi to Vietnamese and Mexican food, and different religions and dietary needs are considered in having halal and vegan restaurants.

The fourth minor difference concerns public amenities, public transport, and finding destinations. On the promotional videos, public amenities or public transportation are hardly shown or mentioned. This is understandable as they are hardly the most attractive elements of a city to e.g. tourists. What makes this finding noteworthy is comparing the absence of these two elements to the UGC, where both are very much praised and featured as a common and reoccurring element. Additionally, the promotional videos do not address the issue of ease of access to destinations. The promotional videos do not show any transfers of journeys between two destinations, whereas the UGC reveals the difficulties one may encounter before being able to enjoy the sought-after place or phenomenon. The UGC prove that places and destinations may be difficult to find, the places may not necessarily inform of their opening times or keep them up to date, they may have moved, gone out of business or are under renovations. This is an aspect of the Seoul city not apparent on the promotional videos and may, therefore, surprise e.g. a visitor.

Even though the promotional videos lack presentation of the public amenities, public transportation, and ease of access, they do briefly mention some things concurring with the UGC on the topic. Therefore, it can be concluded that either these elements are considered so ordinary and universal to all cities that there is no need to explicitly showcase them on the promotional videos, or they are in such bad shape that featuring them would be counterproductive.

Finally, the fifth minor difference is the prices. Even though in chapter 2.2 Gunn (1972, as cited in Michaelidou et al., 2013) argues that commercial sources often focus on practical aspects including public amenities and prices, the expenses of Seoul are not featured on the promotional videos at all. As such, it is impossible to determine the level of expenses Seoul requires on a daily basis. The UGC does not refer to prices very often either, but the analysis of the UGC does reveal information such as lunch being often cheaper than desserts, eating out being affordable enough to prefer it over cooking at home, and public transportation being more affordable than taxis or owning a private car.

Therefore, one can expect the prices of Seoul to be either too high to be favorable for the city brand, or too ordinary to be mentioned.

7.2 Answering the second research question

As organic images are proven to be more effective in forming a place brand than commercial ones, it would be worrisome for the place brand of Seoul if the UGC and the promotional videos only had differences and nothing in common. In that case, the Seoul city brand would likely not be recognized or accepted by the city's stakeholders and could damage the already existing city brand. However, studying the analysis results show that the UGC and the promotional materials do project six major similarities, as well as two minor similarities. These similarities answer to the second research question:

2. How does the city identity projected intentionally by the place marketers correspond to the city identity projected unintentionally by the city residents?

The first major similarity is the connection between nature and urban life. Based on the analysis, both the UGC and the promotional videos depict Seoul as a city where nature and urban life are seamlessly connected. In Seoul, one can enjoy the perks of nature, vegetation, and fresh air without giving up the convenience of a modern city with its amenities. The degree of both nature and urban environment can be adjusted as per personal preferences: one can immerse oneself in nature by e.g. going to a nearby park or for a walk alongside the Han river, spending a day shopping underneath the sleek skyscrapers of Gangnam, or enjoying takeaway lunch or coffee outside under lush trees.

The second major similarity is social media-readiness. As argued in chapter 2.4, when stakeholders' place perceptions are conveyed online via electronic word-of-mouth, the content plays a vital role in constructing and maintaining the city image and city brand. The interactive "public-private partnership" of place promoters and other content creators on social media enhances transparency and two-way communication beyond the realms of traditional media. The ubiquity of social media is considered on both the promotional videos and the UGC. Based on both, an experience needs to look good on social media or has to already be trending in order for it to be attractive and worth trying. The UGC

creators and promotional videos alike take their viewers to cafés and places selected for their uniqueness and specialness. More often than not places from museums to cafés, shops, parks, and even regular alleys have spots specifically designed and allocated for taking photos. Even food items are designed to look impressive enough to make a good social media post. Photography and visual elements are clearly important in all areas of experiences. The UGC creators often exclaim how a place or an experience is popular on social media, which is either how they found out about it or the reason they needed to go there too. When an item, piece of clothing, boutique, or a natural phenomenon such as the muhly grass becomes popular online, it is featured repeatedly on both the UGC and the promotional videos, and sometimes even multiple times on the same channel. The promotional videos take one step further than the UGC in utilizing the power of social media, and always provide a usable hashtag for any given experience on the videos.

The third major similarity is the coexistence of history and the modern-day, which could, in some respect, be considered a difference as well. The promotional videos deliberately try to prove that Seoul has a myriad of historical buildings, sites, landmarks, and monuments to visit. In addition to their historical and cultural relevance, they are also impressive or beautiful enough for photographing and sharing on social media. Compared to the promotional videos, the UGC seems to lack these elements since they do not intentionally showcase them. The discovered differences in the amount and intensity of featuring the tangible and intangible heritage indicate that the lives of the UGC creators are more affected by consumerism and cafés than history, whereas the place promoters see the city's and nation's past as more unique to Seoul when competing with other cities and places of attention. In this respect the UGC and the promotional videos present a different kind of image of Seoul, appealing to very different stakeholder groups. However, both the tangible and the intangible Korean heritage and history are present on the UGC videos, manifesting as e.g. the traditional or historical buildings in the background, or religious sites and landmarks passed by on a walk somewhere. Paper lanterns celebrating Buddha's birthday, or an ornamental pavilion are signs of history even when they are not explicitly mentioned on the UGC videos. Some elements may even have gone unnoticed by the researcher due to a lack of knowledge in Korean history. In addition to this evident connection of history and modern-day, the UGC and the promotional videos share care and concern for not letting the history disappear, name efforts to restore historical

buildings, and express their gratitude over the traditions enduring amidst the modern world.

Referring back to Kotler and Gartner (2002) and Dinnie's (2010) idea of most city images being based on stereotypes, the place promoters must balance between presenting a city so overly simplified that it only resonates with external stakeholders and a city so fine-tuned that only locals appreciate it. However, here the elements deemed attractive and interesting by the place promoters and therefore presented in the promotional videos are the same or similar to the elements present on the UGC. This indicates that on this part, the ideas of Seoul city identity are similar between the place promoters and the internal stakeholders. Therefore, the videos may potentially contribute to a more realistic city image and lead to a city brand accepted by both the internal and the external stakeholder groups.

The fourth major similarity is the coexistence of people. Even though the promotional videos overly emphasize the friendliness and warmth of locals and diversity and different ethnicities, both UGC and promotional videos reassure that one does not have to know Korean to be able to enjoy themselves. Seoul is truly a global city that welcomes all. In the end, both the UGC and the promotional videos make it clear that even without Korean language skills one can get by and have nice and warm encounters with the locals. It is apparent on both the UGC and the promotional videos that Seoul is prepared for foreigners and encourages them to explore the city despite the level of their language skills or country-of-origin. For example, all public transportation signs and stops are translated into English. Social encounters with Seoul citizens are mainly positive ones no matter the language skills of the parties. Local Koreans might not speak English and the UGC creators may not speak Korean, but any shortcomings during the encounters are then mended with e.g. gestures. However, with the appropriate language skills, one can definitely have deeper experiences and connections with the city and its inhabitants.

The coexistence of people refers not only to local Koreans being amicable towards foreigners but also the locals being conscious of other locals, therefore coexisting peacefully yet efficiently. On both the UGC and the promotional videos, activities and experiences are rarely experienced completely alone: the main actors attend to lessons and tours with a guide and other participants, share and enjoy meals with friends, or have

conversations with the café owners and shopkeepers. There is coexistence even among the food culture since Seoul city features a myriad of diverse restaurants serving foreign cuisines from Italian to Japanese food. Different religions are considered in e.g. having halal barbeque places.

The fifth major similarity is the editorial choices. As explained in chapters 4 and 5, the more authority over the editorial choices, the more is revealed of the editor's ideals. Even though the UGC and especially vlogs are said to be realistic in that they often are not scripted and show occurrences as they unfold, there are occasions when one can see the artistic and professional choices made by the content creator. For example, UGC creator Cari Cakes seems to stop filming altogether in crowded cafés, thus creating a false sensation of the popular places being more spacious and emptier than they actually are. Filming from carefully selected angles with special lenses creates a deceptive sense of space and omitting expenses may give an unpleasant surprise if the prices do not fit one's budget.

The usage of spokespersons is also similar in the UGC and the promotional videos. Based on the analysis of the design and layout choices, it seems as though the promotional videos try to get further from blatantly advertising Seoul and closer to conveying a more genuine and natural city identity. Machin (2014), for one, argues in chapter 2.3 that user-generated content rich in stories and experiences have a major positive impact on the place image. It almost seems like the promotional videos are trying to emulate the organic feeling of the user-generated content, for example with the Visit Seoul TV's 'Beautiful Place in Seoul' series and the spokespersons sharing their unique but relatable experiences on SMG's 'I, You and Seoul' series.

Even though the promotional videos aim for creating a certain city image and impacting the city brand while the UGC does so inadvertently, both the UGC and the promotional videos use editorial choices as a method to realize some goals or a purpose they have in mind for the videos. Referring back to Margolis and Pauwels (2011), the UGC creators are not mindless puppets without agency. The choices the UGC creators make when omitting pieces of footage, selecting background music, and making the cuts hold a similar power over the resulting city image than the editorial choices the promotional videos, regardless of the motives behind these editorial choices.

The sixth major similarity is the vitality of the city throughout the day. Both the UGC and the promotional videos present the viewers with a city that never sleeps and where an endless amount of activities and amenities are available at all times. Even some of the suggested experiences, such as various activities connected to the Han river, having a picnic and singing at a karaoke room, feature on both the UGC and the promotional videos. Based on the analysis, Seoul offers an infinite amount of activities both for free and for payment, economically and expensively, indoors and outdoors, in the city and in nature, related to history or modern times, alone or with friends, in English or in Korean. A promotional video statement summarizes the category quite well: "No matter which city I live in, Seoul is the fastest, most dynamic, and safest, like "magic" (Seoul City Official, I.Seoul.U., 'You and Seoul: #1 Seoul is like a mother')."

As for the minor similarities projected by the UGC and the promotional videos, the first one is overcrowding. There evidently are a lot of people out and about at any time of the day. Even though the promotional videos present larger varieties of crowds from being completely alone to being in the middle of a massive public event, a comparison with the UGC reveals that the size of the crowds depends largely on the day, season, and popularity of the destination or phenomenon. Evenings and weekends are more active hours, events and openings gather bigger crowds, places famous on social media always have waiting lists, the popularity of nature attractions depends on the optimal seasons and the weather, and a place with a designated photo spot is more popular than without one. Nonetheless, crowds are a common feature of Seoul projected by both the UGC and the promotional videos.

Finally, the second minor similarity concerns safety. Even though there are no officials or unambiguous CCTVs on the videos, the freedom and ease with which the main actors move about alone even during the night-time indicates that they are not afraid of e.g. getting hurt or robbed. No-one is seen jaywalking and there is an abundance of sidewalks, pedestrian crossings, and overpasses. One UGC creator argues that they have never felt safer in any other city and one promotional video is even titled 'I, You and Seoul: #3 Seoul is safety' (Seoul City Official). However, it would be interesting to study a man's side on the safety of Seoul, since these findings seem to only emphasize the safety for women especially.

7.3 Implications and proposals for further studies

The results of this study are surprising and not what was expected before the analysis. As the intentional promotional goals which STO and SMG wish to reach are very different from the purposes of the UGC, considerably more differences in the projected city identity were expected. For the same reason, a smaller number of major similarities were expected.

Difference	Promotional video content	User-created content (UGC)	Similarity	Promotional video content & UGC
Major	Seasons reduced to the few most presentable ones	All seasons and their unattractive sides presented	Major	Connection of nature and urban life
Major	Using nature as a promotional tool	Nature not exceedingly emphasized	Major	Social media-readiness
Major	Diversity of the city reduced to simplified juxtapositions	Diversity of the city presented in a multidimensional and realistic way	Major	Coexistence of history and modern day
Major	Shopping and café culture not considered as important experiences for stakeholders	Shopping and café culture are an essential part of the city experience	Major	Coexistence of people
Minor	Seoul is family-oriented	Children under certain age are not welcomed to certain public places	Major	Editorial choices as a method for realizing a goal for the piece of content
Minor	Enthusiastic emphasizing of events	Events not particularly emphasized	Major	Vitality of the city throughout the day
Minor	A focus on the traditional Korean food and cuisine	A focus on the diversity of the food and cuisine	Minor	Crowds as a common feature of Seoul
Minor	Lack of public amenities and public transportation	Public amenities and public transportation frequently praised and featured	Minor	Seoul is a safe city
Minor	Expenses completely omitted	Implications of prices visible		

Table 3. Main differences and similarities of the promotional video content and the user-generated content.

The found similarities indicate that at least partially the place marketers and internal stakeholders of Seoul share perceptions of Seoul city identity. When these common perceptions are disseminated, they have an impact on the external city image. As argued in chapter 2, both the city identity and the city image are needed in creating and maintain

a strong city brand. Referring back to Kotler and Gartner (2002), most place images are based on stereotypes, which are pervasive no matter how dated or inaccurate they are. Therefore, creating a positive city image is imperative for a strong city brand. Audiences easily interpret a city identity projected by place marketers as ingenuine and selective. For this reason, the brand messages are more easily accepted when the elements projected by the promotional videos are closer to the elements projected by the believable, natural, and organic UGC. Accordingly, the more commonalities between the place marketer videos and the videos created by the stakeholders, the more cohesive, interesting, unique, and accepted city brand is possibly built.

The major differences do not have solely a negative impact on the city brand, for they also indicate that the place promoters have made decisions on which stakeholder groups they wish to cater to more than the others. Referring back to Zenker (2011), place brands must indeed consider different stakeholder groups and their needs and hopes for the city on some level. However, lack of consistency and an effort to suit all target audiences simultaneously leads to diluting and weakening the brand. Consequently, a weak city brand is unable to compete with stronger and more consistent place brands. As argued in chapter 2, this “one brand suits all” line of thought is a problem of the older conception of a city brand as a controllable product. It does not fit the recent conceptions of a city brand as an interactive form of two-way communication, which can lead to problems if not carefully managed.

For further studies, it would be interesting to study media content richer in both quantity and diversity. For example, there is currently no male point-of-view in the study, and language barriers prevent from analyzing videos by native Koreans. It would also be useful to include other promotional methods and channels used by STO and SMG, such as their Instagram and Facebook channels, official websites, and tv commercials. Perceptions of Seoul city projected by stakeholders other and local YouTubers, such as students or business owners, would also be interesting to include in the study. Furthermore, this Thesis studies the different and similar elements of city brand in the UGC and the promotional videos but does not research the city image or perceptions they create and evoke in the viewers. Analyzing the city image and perceptions of multiple stakeholders would help to study how well they correspond to what the place marketers

are trying to convey. The results could potentially be used in improving the Seoul city brand and its promotional messages.

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Attachments

Tables

Table 1.1. Example of the simple index for “look and feel” of the content, part 1/2.

Table 1.2. Example of the simple index for “look and feel” of the content, part 2/2.

Table 2. An example of the Table used in analyzing the research material part 1/3.

	Cari Cakes	Cari Cakes	Cari Cakes	Cari Cakes
	Spring Weekend in Seoul Esports, Vintage Shops, and Cafes VLOG / https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zw40OuZjJLo	Some Solo Time in Wintery Seoul, Korea Vlog ft Ana Luisa / https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IH1NQ_as	Summer in Seoul, Ice Cream, and Books + Meeting Q2HAN! Life in Korea Vlog / https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1J2kJMgFt4c	being grumpy and sick in seoul VLOG museums, book stores, cafes / https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K1LslJqZdI4
NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT	March	December	July	October
Weather (temperature, humidity, rainfall, sun...)	Sunny but windy, toppatakit päällä "out in the cold!"(March)	Sunny but cold / 0:07 "Hi guys from a very cold Gwanghwamun" / 1:12 "while I'm walking and talking and freeing my fingers and ears off" / 3:58 "let's go to a café, my hands are falling off (due to the cold) (December) / routamaa / "two weeks ago I caught all these trees bright yellow and losing all their leaves and now take a look" (all bare). -> seasons change really quickly?	Sunny and warm (wearing sun glasses and sandals) (July) / 1:11 "it's _insanely_ hot today, like, insanely hot. It's 33, but I think it feels like 36 or something crazy. Anyway, it's very very warm." / "get out of this heat, I can't stand this anymore" / "This is dangerous because it's so hot and the stairs are metal and I can't hold on to the railing" / "now we gotta push through the heat" / 7:26 "-- how sticky and how heavy the air is - I'm feeling it" / "I hope that if anyone of you is in Seoul that you're not dying of this heat, it is so hot."	Sunny, only wears a t-shirt / 4:12 "it's getting quite hot" / 6:59 "it is hothothot" / 7:19 A public display screen shows (in hangul) that the air quality is great today /
Variety and uniqueness of flora and fauna			Caption: i have never heard cicadas this loud (so loud that they sound like a waterfall) / A CATS BY THE WINDOWSILL IN THE BOOKSTORE / Chocolate Cosmos flower shop has a dog	cicadas/frogs/insects are loud
Nature (landscape, mountains, water, parks)	Leafless trees here and there / Hapjeong area filled with cherry blossoms in few weeks (around April)	Mountains visible in the background in Gwanghwamun, more trees than in e.g. Hongdae area, tall hay (looks like planted though, growing in certain areas in a certain way) / some trees have red and yellow leaves, others have none at all /	Lush greenery: trees and plants - no flowers but all green everything	Lush greenery: trees and plants - n

Table 2.1. An example of the Table used in analyzing the research material part 2/3.

SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT				
Hospitality and friendliness of locals & personal encounters	At the Understated: "and the guy who owns it is so nice. He was actually like chatting with every single person, like I walked in and he was like 'oh is this your first time, are you Irish - I never get asked if I'm Irish, i always get asked if I'm Northern European, that was great. And then every single other person who came in he asked them like 'oh is this your first time, do you live here, how did you hear about the place' which is very rare and something I miss very much from American culture." // 10:51 "today is just the day for really nice chatty people. The person who was here today working, isn't the owner so she had to text the owner and check the prices of the things I wanted -- even though i told her i can speak Korean, she tried to speak English and she was so cute and so nice and like overly friendly than what I'm used to."	Hongdae 8:56 Cari asked a café worker where she could buy a post card hanging on the wall of the café. The worker asked the boss if they could give the one on the wall to Cari, and the owner replied cheerfully "yeah yeah give it to her". And she got it.	Asked if you can do taste testers at the ice cream place and you can.	2:33 "they're really nice, this is a newish café" / The bus has a laminated sign saying (in hangul) "have a good day today" /
Language barriers	Some people speak and try to speak English even if you tell them you know Korean - so nope	Some of the signs and placates written only in Hangul, some have English as well / Although sometimes English translations are strange 6:29 portion called "Boston butt" / Reserving movie tickets on a machine in Korean (is there an English option at all?)	Ice cream place has flavours in Korean and English	none

Table 2.2. An example of the Table used in analyzing the research material part 3/3.

THE VIDEO ELEMENTS				
Main actor: what they do, facial expressions, gestures	Included in other categories	Included in other categories	Included in other categories	Included in other categories
Verbal signifiers (what is said, how, with whom and to whom)	Included in other categories	4:12 "off to a great start - the place I wanted to show you is not only closed but it's hellia closed (all hooded up with a tarpaul) (-> places don't abide by certain opening and closing hours? don't have updated sns or websites? people just don't bother checking beforehand if the place is still there and open?) / 10:58 "What a fun date with myself!" (Seoul is a place where one can enjoy oneself alone - no need for company?)	6:40 "I have probably the worst headache that I've had in my entire life but everything is making me so happy that it doesn't even matter" (It's lovely in Seoul?)	6:00 "once upon a time when first I came to Korea, a friend of mine told me that you should never walk down this street that runs parrallel to deoksu palace, you should never walk this street with your significant other, because there's a superstition that you'll break up not long after. -- I've never heard this since --- Is this true? -- Is this a real superstition? Because there are so many couples here" -> either it's not a superstition or ppl just don't believe in it anymore
Sonic signifiers (sounds, background music)	Depends on the activity: on the bus the music is happy and soft, at the Starcraft tournament electronic music, at the coffee shop atmospheric acoustic violin track: TV Girl - https://tvgirl.bandcamp.com/ / Mise Darlings - https://www.instagram.com/itsdarlingb.. / Scott Holmes - https://scottholmesmusic.com/	10:57 Kind of loud traffic at Sinjeong / Tunnelmallista pehmeää fiilistelymusiikkia (jazzia, saksofoni jne)	Sounds of life are louder on this one compared to the other videos by the same creator: Loud traffic, birds chirping in the background	Occasional cheery background music, no voiceover
Layout & design signifiers (video format/genre, editing)	vlog, editing seems like only cutting some parts from the middle in order to shorten the video, but does not look like the scenes have been rearranged	vlog, similar to the previous one.	vlog, looks like not edited at all.	Used many diverse ways of filming and framing the shots: Zooming rapidly on cute things (window displays), tasty things (cookie), pretty things (flowers), interesting and quirky things (neon signs, bus window signs) + wide slow shots taking in huge parks and plazas and tall buildings and big shopping centers and museums

Table 3. Main differences and similarities of the promotional video content and the user-generated content.

Figures

Figure 1. An example of a grittier area on the UGC. (Cari Cakes, ‘being grumpy and sick in seoul VLOG | museums, bookstores, cafes’)

Figure 2. Vivid nightlife on the promotional videos. (Seoul City Official, I.Seoul.U., ‘I, You and Seoul: #6 Seoul is Pop Art’)

Figure 3. Nightlife on the UGC. (Cari Cakes, ‘Some Solo Time in Wintery Seoul, Korea | Vlog ft Ana Luisa’)

Figure 4. Café Zapangi is famous on Instagram for e.g. its pink vending machine entrance. (Marie’s Kawaii World, Mangwon | Seoul Travel Guide | Mangwon Market Street Food and Hongdae Style Cafes)

Figure 5. Café Understated’s decor looks like it is under construction (Cari Cakes, ‘Spring Weekend in Seoul | Esports, Vintage Shops, and Cafes VLOG’)

Figure 6. The gates of the royal palace are in the middle of a busy street. (Cari Cakes, ‘Some Solo Time in Wintery Seoul, Korea | Vlog ft Ana Luisa’).

Figure 7. A bakery and a pizza restaurant have designated photo spots outside (Marie’s Kawaii World, ‘Top Places to visit in Garosugil in Sinsa-dong Gangnam [가로수길]’)

Figure 8. A bakery and a pizza restaurant have designated photo spots outside (Marie’s Kawaii World, ‘Top Places to visit in Garosugil in Sinsa-dong Gangnam [가로수길]’)

Figure 9. An example of a reoccurring shot emphasizing the vibrancy and energy of Seoul from above. (VisitSeoulTV, ‘Exciting moments by BTS’ j-hope’)

Figure 10. A street view of traditional houses at Ikseon-Dong with skyscrapers and the mountains visible in the distance. (2hearts1seoul, ‘OLD SEOUL’ | Hanok Cafe & Rice Cake Heaven 🍡캐나다 아내가 좋아하는 떡을 찾아 종로로!’)